

THURSDAY, 31 JANUARY 2008

IN THE CHAIR: MR COCILOVO

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 9 a.m.)

President. – *(IT)* I have received a request from Mr Hannan for an item on the interpretation of Rule 19 of our Rules of Procedure.

Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE). – Mr President, yesterday the President announced an interpretation of Rule 19 which puts this House in plain violation of its own regulations. We have now departed from the rule of law and given arbitrary power to the Chair to tear up our rule book and proceed as he sees fit. This is plainly illegal under our own rules. This Chamber may be sovereign but it must, nonetheless, follow its own rules.

This interpretation by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs is going to be contested today. It may come before this House in a vote. If we vote in favour, collectively, we are voting to abandon the rules under which we proceed. I would almost be tempted to compare it to the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* of 1933, but I think that would be disproportionate and perhaps a little rude to our President, who is a committed democrat and a decent man.

Let me instead quote the grandfather of British resistance to totalitarianism, Edmund Burke. ‘They must be worse than blind who do not see with what undeviating regularity of system, in this case and in all cases, they pursue their scheme for the utter destruction of every independent power. ... Their will is the law, not only at home, but as to the concerns of every nation. ... They have swept away the very constitutions under which the Legislatures acted –’

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – *(IT)* Thank you. I have taken note of your comments, but on this point on interpretation of the Rules of Procedure, as you know, there is already a vote planned for 11 a.m., so we will proceed in this direction.

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Communication of Council common positions: see Minutes

4. Freedom, security and justice (annual debate) (Articles 2 and 39 TEU) (debate)

President. – *(IT)* The next item is the debate on

- the oral question by Jean-Marie Cavada, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, to the Council on the 2007 annual debate on the progress made in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Articles 2 and 39 of the EU Treaty) (O-0005/2008 - B6-0006/2008), and

- the oral question by Jean-Marie Cavada, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, to the Commission on the 2007 annual debate on the progress made in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Articles 2 and 39 of the EU Treaty) (O-0006/2008 - B6-0007/2008).

Gérard Deprez, deputising for the author. – *(FR)* Mr President, President of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the debate we are having today is taking place, as you know, in a context characterised by two essential elements.

The first of these – I don’t have to remind you – is the calendar. Being generous, we have at best 16 operational months before the end of the European Parliament’s current term. So you see how, with such a tight timescale, we need to agree on the matters we hope to finalise together in the time that remains. We cannot do everything; we will need to choose and stick to our decision.

The second element, Mr President, is even more significant from our point of view. This is that the prospect of the entry into force of the new treaty, you know as well as we do, will lead to major structural changes in our area of competence. I would particularly mention the removal of the artificial separation of policies in the first pillar from those in the third pillar, which will have the effect, in particular, of introducing codecision and subjecting measures that until now were mainly the sole preserve of the Council and fell outside the competence of the European Court of Justice to real judicial control.

You will therefore understand our impatience to see the new treaty enter into force as quickly as possible, since it represents both a strengthening of democratic control and a strengthening of the rights of citizens. And you will also understand in the light of these two criteria, which are – I repeat – the strengthening of democratic control and the strengthening of citizens' rights, the reticence we feel in principle about dealing under the current treaty set-up with sensitive matters that could soon be dealt with under the provisions of the new treaty.

This reticence in principle is very real. It runs deep, and it is widely shared by the different political groups represented both in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and in the more general setting of our assembly. However deep it runs, this reticence is also, at least at present, quite measured. We are not motivated, Mr President, President of the Council, Commissioner, by the perverse intention of delaying taking action on important matters that have reached maturity and the urgency of which is not in doubt.

On the contrary, we are willing to try to reach a kind of gentlemen's agreement, through genuine dialogue, that would give each of our institutions the safeguards and guarantees it believes necessary. In our view, it should be possible to come to an agreement very quickly on some kind of interinstitutional legislative programme for 2008 and the first half of 2009, which would contain a limited number of common priorities in sensitive matters, would come with mutual commitments, and would enable us to benefit from the positive provisions of the new treaty, without bringing them in early.

Parliament already indicated a possible method of responding to this request during the vote held at the last plenary in Strasbourg on modifying the Staff Regulations and missions of Europol. Indeed, President of the Council, Commissioner, it was by an overwhelming majority of 537 votes that Parliament adopted an amendment stipulating that this decision would be revised within six months of the date of entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Of course, even though it was adopted by an overwhelming majority, this unilateral amendment is not binding. However, as you will have understood, it is a very clear manifestation of our political will to open up a discussion and find solutions. It is in this spirit that our committee confirms both its determination and its availability for a genuine interinstitutional dialogue.

Dragutin Mate, President-in-Office. – (SL) I am happy to be here with you today and to take part in such an important debate. The implementation of policies in the field of justice and internal affairs is of extreme importance for our citizens. With the development of our society and modern technologies, the question of security has become one of the most important issues for our citizens. I think that we, as representatives of the Council, the Commission and Parliament, have the same aims: to secure conditions for cooperation between Member States which will offer our citizens an appropriate level of security.

Two years ago we began debating two items of legislation which were intended to enable a giant leap in the quality of our cooperation. The first was a decision to establish Europol as a European agency, and the other was to incorporate the Treaty of Prüm into European legislation. In accordance with the new legal basis, Europol will be able to respond more rapidly to changing trends in terrorism and organised crime and it will further improve its analytical capacity and ability to support the Member States. This will substantially help in a more effective struggle against the organised crime and terrorist organisations which are active in several States of the European Union. The incorporation of the Treaty of Prüm will enable a faster exchange of DNA, fingerprint and vehicle registration data from national databases.

The two previous Presidencies, Germany and Portugal, have done everything to assist the adoption of both items of legislation by the end of our three Presidencies. In accordance with the programme which I presented to your colleagues in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, we are planning to reach a consensus on both items by June of this year. In view of their importance, a delay in adopting them would not be justified, especially as we have already approved them and harmonised them among the Member States and among all three institutions to this current level. As for the legislation still awaiting debate, the Presidency is willing to cooperate closely with Parliament on a case-by-case basis and in the spirit of joint

responsibility for their adoption. Both institutions will thereby share responsibility for the security of EU citizens and in other areas.

The Council is currently discussing proposals for legislation of general application to do with combating all forms of organised crime and terrorism. This mainly concerns data gathering and exchange procedures and also applies to cooperation within Europol. We are also discussing legislation relating to specific problems and specific criminal activities.

In addition to the proposal to incorporate the Treaty of Prüm and the decision on Europol, we are currently building on the measures for preventing undesirable persons from entering the territory of the European Union. I am personally involved in the efforts to accelerate the development of the second generation of the Schengen information system. We are preparing to accelerate the adoption of legislation that will make it easier to use the visa information system. In external affairs, we are working hard with the countries of the western Balkans and Russia to prepare regional assessments of threats from organised crime.

This month the Council started to debate the first of two proposals for directives on legal immigration. After the first meeting of working groups, where the debate concerned highly qualified workers, the Presidency felt that there was a wide consensus on the application of the directive. We hope that further debate will identify the key political issues by the end of our Presidency, and we will then hand the dossier on to the French Presidency so that work can continue effectively.

For two years now, Parliament and the Council have been debating the proposal for a directive on the return of third country citizens who are living illegally in the European Union. The debate is focused on several specific issues on which the institutions have very different opinions. The Presidency will continue to do its utmost to reach an agreement with Parliament that will enable the directive to be adopted as soon as possible, preferably at first reading. However, we must be careful that this directive does not make the return procedures worse and thus reduce the effectiveness of our policies in the fight against illegal migration.

In deepening this dialogue with the countries of origin and transit, the Council will continue to strive for the ongoing implementation of global approaches to problems of migration, emphasising that they have to be included and that there has to be a geographic balance. Our attention will thus be focused on north Africa and south-eastern Europe.

Franco Frattini, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome the President of the Council and thank the Chairman of the Committee, Mr Deprez, for his introduction.

Clearly today we are not just discussing an assessment of the results for 2007, which in our particular area have been positive, in my opinion: we have opened up internal borders to more than 400 million EU citizens with Schengen enlargement; we have created and implemented the Fundamental Rights Agency; we have reached a very important agreement with Parliament on the Visa Information System; we have worked on immigration, as the Slovenian Minister Mr Mate mentioned, and on terrorism.

Just to give a statistic, in 2007 the proposals that fell within my remit and that I presented to you constituted almost 20% of all the strategic initiatives of the European Commission, which means that this area has been and continues to be of truly vast importance. We have achieved everything that was in the strategic programme.

Today, in 2008, we are facing a challenge every bit as important. As you know, the Commission identified 26 strategic proposals for 2008, and eight of these, so almost 30%, concern the area of freedom, security and justice.

This year we will deal with external borders: there will be a package of proposals in February to strengthen security at our external borders, along the same lines and using the same criteria as for the Schengen and visa information systems; we will carry out a comprehensive assessment of Frontex, which will enable everyone to learn lessons for the future too; we will, I hope, make some progressive and ambitious proposals on civil justice; we are discussing with the Slovenian Presidency what is known as e-justice, or how to give citizens better access to civil and criminal justice through the use of the latest technologies.

Of course we will continue to deal with immigration. The initiatives of last year, on which a broad political consensus was reached, will be dealt with and developed during this year. This year there will be the action plan on asylum, asylum seekers and the European system for the treatment of refugees; in July and November we will have the two comprehensive proposals.

We will be proposing a European strategy for the prevention of violent radicalisation, one of the key factors of a political strategy to fight terrorism; this will happen in June.

However, I think the political issue raised by Mr Deprez deserves a political response, which I will happily give. 2008 is a year of transition. It is a year of transition to the Treaty of Lisbon and its ratification, with a view to its entry into force – which we would all like – in January 2009. Then it is clear that the three requirements, on the one hand to work together with Parliament to assist this transition, and on the other not to slow down initiatives that are ready for action and on which there is consensus, and at the same time not to anticipate what the Treaty of Lisbon will say or do when it comes into force, must all be kept in mind. So I believe that an interinstitutional political agreement will be necessary.

Clearly, this can be reached only if the Council, Commission and Parliament agree on the working method, even before agreeing on the specific priorities. If there is political agreement on the working method, we can define common priorities together, and the priorities should be initiatives that have an immediate added value for citizens, that attract sufficient consensus, and that achieve the balance we want between the interests at play: security, safeguarding the security of citizens, and also promoting and protecting civil liberties – the usual political balancing act that is the challenge facing all of us.

I believe that the best working method is the one we have begun to explore with the Council: not working in six-month periods, but bringing together the trio of Presidencies, which the current and previous Presidencies have done, to look at initiatives over an eighteen-month period rather than a six-month period, because it is clearly the case that if we work only with initiatives over a limited timescale, we do not have the vision that should carry us – I believe – reasonably, at least to June 2009, because the date of the European Parliament elections is, in my opinion, the only real deadline we should be looking at.

So I am prepared to do this, I am prepared for a political dialogue with the Council and with Parliament to identify those things we can offer our citizens as an immediate response from among the 2008 and 2009 priorities, and those that deserve to be looked into in more detail. This is how I believe we will demonstrate, without prejudice to the Treaty, that when the institutions work together they get there more quickly and with better political results. This is the path I think we could all follow together.

Manfred Weber, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, today's debate concerns European internal policy and I believe it is right to do what the Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Frattini, has already done, and that is to take a brief look back. 2007 was a great year for European internal policy. The opening up of the Schengen area has been a great success and we are also able to confirm to our citizens that if all the investigative authorities in Europe have access to one database system, this will not reduce security, but increase it.

Nevertheless, we must also look to the future, of course. I read here that the SIS II was debated at the informal Council meeting in Slovenia under the Slovenian Presidency. As I understand it, the central system is now once again being shelved. Sections of the Commission appear to be ready, but now a new political group of specialised interior ministers is being set up to deal with the SIS II. Their aim as regards SIS II is to make real practical progress in combating organised crime and crime in Europe. Therefore, why do we have to delay any further here? I am concerned that after enlargement we are falling into a black hole because everyone is satisfied that enlargement has turned out well. I should like to point out that we in Parliament carried out an evaluation of the systems after six months and will also insist on doing so.

A second practical subject area in which I would ask for action to be taken is the issue of police cooperation. As you know, unfortunately not all sections of the Prüm Treaty have been incorporated into Community law, but in particular essential issues of police cooperation were not adopted. Further progress therefore needs to be made here too.

We are awaiting proposals from the Commission regarding border protection. I am looking forward to proposals regarding the entry and exit systems because it will be very interesting to find out how many overstayers we have in Europe.

One final point: we are to have a new treaty. I should therefore like to encourage our Committee Chairman, Mr Deprez. We shall gain the citizens' confidence in this treaty if we haul the decisions in force in the internal policy sector out from the back rooms of the Council and bring them into the bright light of this plenary sitting. Here people will see how decisions are made. Therefore, please accept Parliament's outstretched hand. We are ready to cooperate.

Claudio Fava, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, President of the Council, Vice-President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I believe I can share Commissioner Frattini's approach to the debate. We need to look to the future, we need to understand how we can manage the time left to us with a sense of responsibility and commitment shared by all the European institutions.

We believe that after years of debate on the area of freedom, security and justice, in which this Parliament has been critical of the clear democratic deficit – such a tricky area for the fundamental rights of citizens – we can welcome the signature of the new treaty, which finally creates a European dimension in this area, and which gives Parliament full legislative powers, including on judicial, criminal and police cooperation and on entry and residence policies.

For this reason, my group also believes that, even during the delicate phase of ratification, no institution can escape the fact that the framework has completely changed. We know it is not possible simply to bring forward the entry into force of the Treaty, but we believe it would be a mistake politically to carry on working on highly sensitive dossiers in a way that sidesteps the democratic scope of the Treaty of Lisbon.

For this reason, our group also believes that a joint commitment from Parliament, the Council and the Commission is necessary to identify any dossiers of particular importance, not to block their passage but to guarantee that Parliament can be consulted with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and to integrate them into the new institutional framework. I am thinking in particular of the important dossiers on which until now we have merely been consulted, such as the proposal for a European PNR system, the proposal to revise the framework decision on terrorism, the directive on the admission of highly qualified workers and the directive on a uniform procedure for the admission of labour migrants.

May I take a few seconds, Mr President, to express concern over what the Council was saying about the Returns Directive. We appreciate the Council's availability and cooperation, but we believe that there are a few extremely delicate points. One in particular is that 18 months' detention is not considered an improvement in the effectiveness of this directive, but an oppressive measure on which a good many in this Parliament will continue to express their displeasure.

Sarah Ludford, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, we are looking at the progress that the European Union has made towards becoming this area of freedom, security and justice. This means a development towards a Europe in which both civil rights are upheld and complex issues of law enforcement, such as terrorism and transnational crime, are addressed.

But, unfortunately, what we have had in the last 10 years is a failure to strike the right balance between security, freedom and justice, and actually rather a narrow definition of security.

Law enforcement needs to be better targeted and civil liberties need an upgrade. For instance, the failure – in 10 years – to agree on a measure upholding minimum rights for suspects and defendants is a real hole in the record.

Advocate-General Maduro, in an opinion on terrorist blacklists – quoting, I think, from the Israeli Supreme Court – said, 'It is when the cannons roar that we especially need the laws. There are no black holes. The war against terrorism is also law's war against those who rise up against it.'

It is a pity that the Council of Member States did not bear that in mind in considering our report from the Temporary Committee on Extraordinary Rendition. We have had no substantive response to that report.

I agree with Commissioner Frattini that we need an agreement between the Commission, Council and Parliament about the way forward in the transition from the unsatisfactory intergovernmental procedures in criminal justice to normal Community decision-making. This is going to take a change of culture and attitude as well as procedures. Some of the third-pillar measures in the pipeline, like Prüm, data protection, EU P&R, are of low-quality in terms of both democratic scrutiny and civil liberties safeguards.

A lot of confidence is being invested in technological projects, either of exchange of data between Member States or of construction of new EU databases. I am all in favour of appropriate data sharing, but I caution against over-reliance on technological quick fixes. Do not let us forget traditional, intelligence-led policing; even if it is more difficult in making it work across borders, it should not be relegated to a secondary effort in the light of the dazzling allure of databases, because this raises big questions of data protection and data security.

I have asked Commissioner Frattini to consider doing a green paper on whether our regime of data security is adequate, particularly in the light of the scandalous losses of data in the UK. He has declined so far. I hope he might reconsider.

Also, can he consider the need for that in the light of the route of profiling that we are going down? Commissioner Frattini does not acknowledge this, but the UK Government does quite openly say, 'we are doing profiling'. Let us have a debate about what safeguards we need.

Finally, on the UK opt-out, I think colleagues in Parliament might appreciate – and certainly I, as a British MEP would – having some idea what the UK strategy will be in the use of the opt-ins and opt-outs, because I think that would be quite helpful in making clear that the UK intends to engage positively in justice and home affairs in the years to come.

Seán Ó Neachtain, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (GA) Mr President, the Irish Government is playing an active, central role in Europe in the fight against international organised crime. Irish police forces are making their contribution through the European Police Office – Europol.

With a population of 500 million, in what are now 27 countries, it is vital that international borders should serve as a protection against the illicit activities of criminals. To enable this to happen, there has to be solidly based intensive cooperation among police, customs, naval, and intelligence services, encompassing all of the Member States.

I should like to stress that the Lisbon Reform Treaty will in no way affect Irish neutrality. Ireland is a neutral country, and Irish troops cannot be deployed overseas unless an appropriate resolution has been adopted in the UN and the necessary consent has been obtained – after a vote in the Dáil Éireann – from the Irish Government.

Jean Lambert, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, my group would agree with much of what has been said, particularly the emphasis on the need for the protection of fundamental rights as a core basis of many of the decisions we would like to see taken in the remaining period of this Parliament.

My group would also agree that an interinstitutional agreement would be useful to avoid the sort of arbitrary use of codecision that we have seen on occasion, that sort of arbitrary use at the behest of the Council when many of us felt, because things could not be got through by unanimity, Parliament was being used as a sort of alibi. We would rather see these sort of arrangements set within a proper framework – and within something that is not going to delay for five years much of the progress that we want to see happen.

In terms of the issues about fundamental rights, we are deeply concerned that one of the issues which does not seem to have been resolved in the Council is the question of procedural safeguards.

Many in this Parliament agreed to the introduction of the European arrest warrant, believing that procedural safeguards would soon follow. Others who were obviously more sceptical said we wanted to see the safeguards first and then we would look at greater cooperation between Member States. So we would like to know, please, when we can expect these measures, which are deeply important to all of our citizens.

We also share the concern voiced this morning on questions about data protection. There are growing concerns about the lack of transparency and, certainly, growing public concern about the way in which data is being used and exchanged without any clear information to the public as to what exactly is happening.

I was slightly concerned, to put it mildly, to hear the Council talk about the issues of the Returns Directive, saying that some Member States do not want return to become more difficult. Some of us might believe that what this means is that the Council does not want to see a safe, secure and open procedure put in place that guarantees the rights of individuals rather than simply, as in the case of some Member States, trying to meet targets through return.

We do not want return necessarily to become more difficult. We want it to become a more open procedure which safeguards rights. One of the issues with which we have concern, for example, is the use by some Member States of an automatic re-entry ban. We also share the concerns on length of detention.

I welcome the statement that was made about the proposal on highly-qualified migrants. At last we may see a positive measure on an immigration policy, a move away from what some of us see as a policy of deterrents that the Union has been following for some time. At last we will get an agreement on something more positive and more open, even if it is only affects a small part of those people coming to the European Union.

But I would welcome a comment, please, on what is happening on the sanctions against employers. Lastly, I would also like an answer to the question posed to both the Council and Commission on the comment about the UK's position on treaty reform.

Giusto Catania, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I much appreciated the willingness of the Commission and also of the Council to reach an interinstitutional political agreement quickly in view of the new transitions we will be experiencing in the next few months. From January 2009 this Parliament will be able to play an important role in freedom, security and justice, particularly in terms of the need for European citizens to be able to exercise democratic control over the choices being made within the area of freedom, security and justice in the European Union.

We think that 2008 will be a year of transition, and therefore a number of priorities in terms of freedom, security and justice must be identified in the course of it. I think we need to go forward with matters on which we cannot turn back, matters we need to insist on. I am thinking about the need to introduce a common asylum policy for 2010 and the need to speed up the process that could lead to defining this common policy; I am also thinking of the need to come up quickly with a general plan for legal immigration, not just to encourage the admission of qualified or highly qualified immigrants, but to prepare a plan that covers all admissions to the European Union; I believe that we also need to focus on the freedom of circulation of men and women within the Schengen area, profiting from the results achieved in 2007, and to try to capitalise on these aspects.

I believe we also ought to try during 2008 to assess some of the choices that have already been made. In particular I am thinking about two important questions. I think that a genuine assessment must be made of the usefulness and effectiveness of Frontex. It seems to me that an objective assessment could quietly bring us to admit that it has not produced the effects that the vast majority of this Parliament and Europe's citizens had hoped for. In the same way, I think that an assessment must be made of the enormous quantity of databases at our disposal. All too often, the exchanges of information are not of any value and sometimes the information is lost.

To conclude, Mr President, I think that we should probably also make a final assessment of the Returns Directive. It appears that we have now reached the point of no return, and we probably need to change our strategy: to come up with an action plan and a plan for legal immigration, and then we will know how to kick out, expel and detain immigrants.

Johannes Blokland, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (NL) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the questions to the Council call for particular attention to developments with regard to Frontex. I have drawn attention to this issue repeatedly in the past. This debate is therefore a good opportunity to raise our concern about Frontex once more. I concur with Mr Catania's words in this regard.

Several national parliaments have urged the governments of the Member States to provide manpower and material for Frontex's activities. Obviously, the Member States are not exactly champing at the bit to participate in operational activities, and I am therefore pleased that the Netherlands has finally agreed to deploy a frigate. Hence my question: what will happen with the boat people and migrants after they are picked up?

Can the President-in-Office tell us how people intercepted in boats at sea will be dealt with? We receive regular reports of the interception of boatloads of migrants; as a rule, these people are first brought to shore and taken care of. Is it the Member State in command of the navy vessel who is obliged to grant asylum or take care of the reception of the intercepted boat people?

From the reaction of the Dutch State Secretary for Justice this week it can be deduced that there is still no definite answer to this question. I should like greater clarification in this regard, as it is not right, of course, that Member States who provide material and manpower should have to bear the full burden. President-in-Office, if you are unable to give us an answer to this question during this debate, will you do so in writing?

I now have another question for Commissioner Frattini. It is easy for ministers of justice to promise to provide navy vessels, for example; but implementation is in the hands of the defence ministers, who are often lucky even to be informed of the promises made by ministers of justice. Clearly, this gives rise to major coordination problems.

My question to Commissioner Frattini is this: what do you intend to do to avoid this kind of problem in future? After all, it has taken a very long time for the promises made so long ago to show the beginnings of the slightest effect.

Koenraad Dillen (NI). – (NL) Mr President, quite rightly, the need for all manner of measures to increase the security of our citizens is extensively debated in this Hemicycle. Frontex springs to mind in this regard. However, let us not bury our heads in the sand, as Europe itself has become much less secure precisely because of the open border policy that has been pursued. The fact is that this policy has tangibly strengthened the power of internationally organised crime without putting adequate measures in place to combat it.

That is not all. European citizens have also fallen victim to waves of legalisation on the status of illegal immigrants that certain countries have decided to carry out. This will certainly not reduce the disgraceful trafficking in human beings. The area of security we are discussing here is, however regrettably, to some extent also an area in which criminals – particularly Islamic extremists – are given free rein.

The essential State competences in this field are all being increasingly eroded – competence with regard to legal immigration, for example. This is unacceptable. The Member States must retain total and unconditional control of their own labour markets, and there must be absolutely no restrictions imposed on the way in which they conduct their labour market policy.

Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, I think Mr Deprez has correctly identified the problem and Vice-President Frattini has provided the solution to that problem.

Strictly speaking we are facing a year of transition, but during that year of transition, to which we need to add six more months up to the end of the parliamentary term, we have some mature decisions to make that we cannot neglect. This is why I think that the interinstitutional agreement is absolutely essential in order to be able to harmonise mature initiatives with the much needed and much desired codecision.

Therefore, Mr President, I think that the importance of initiatives such as those within the framework of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice – let us bear in mind that, of the Commission's 26 strategic proposals, a third come under the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice – gives us a huge responsibility when dealing with the draft legislation that we have under way.

This is why the much called for evaluation of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders deserves all our attention, as do all issues relating to migratory phenomena, concerning both legal and illegal immigration.

Civil and criminal justice to provide better services for citizens, Europol, a revised European Agency in the new framework of the Constitutional Treaty – not forgetting, Mr President, data protection in the third pillar – all of this merits the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice being harmonised in terms of both methods and time.

Stavros Lambrinidis (PSE). – (EL) Mr President, the Internet is the new battlefield. According to the Commission and the Council, it is a battlefield for combating terrorism, and we do not argue with this. For many of us, however, the Internet is also a battlefield for the protection of citizens' fundamental rights. Of course, as we well know, the Internet is used by terrorists, but it is also used by millions of innocent citizens for discussion. What they discuss also happens to be terrorism which, without justifying it, they are trying to understand: something we do all too rarely here, unfortunately. So, notwithstanding the importance of a legislative initiative against the circulation of pro-terrorist propaganda on the Internet, this is also a highly sensitive issue.

Commissioner, President-in-Office of the Council, I have to tell you that this legislative initiative in its present form is somewhat problematic. It does not require that a person spreading pro-terrorist propaganda do so intentionally and... 'and' that propaganda be likely to lead to a terrorist act. Instead of 'and', your text reads 'or'. In other words, should a member of the public try to make sense of terrorism that is being committed somewhere in the world, they risk ending up in trouble simply because 'somebody' believes that their words have led to an act of terrorism: that member of the public is accused, even though they have no intention of causing such an act. This is something you must correct.

I should also ask you to explain whether the contents of our e-mails will be checked. Who will check them to enable the police to judge whether this new law that you are promoting has been violated? Let me remind you that in the case of data retention of telephone calls, you have repeatedly reassured us that the contents

of our SMS messages and phone calls will not be monitored. Will the contents of our e-mails here be monitored as a result of the measure you are promoting?

Another point I wish to emphasise is the European PNR system initiative. My friends, we do not need it. At least, you have not explained to us why we should need it. We have the APIS; we have, as Mr Frattini has quite rightly pointed out, the VIS, a successful outcome of our agreement; and we have Schengen: so we know very well who is travelling where in the world today, and who is coming to Europe.

Furthermore, of the 27 countries in Europe, only 3 currently have measures in place for the possible implementation of PNR. Where is the pressure to harmonise PNR legislation now?

Why are you promoting this measure so fanatically, even though the European data protectors have disagreed with it? Why do you not sit down and discuss it with Parliament, with people who are set on fighting terrorism, but who might be just as concerned about protecting rights – if not more concerned, as we are sometimes accused of being?

Alexander Alvaro (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, what can be affirmed is the fact that not only do the Council and the Commission place greater emphasis on the term 'security' in their documents, but they also appear to have become increasingly aware of citizens' basic freedoms and rights. We in Europe, however, can do as much work as we want on the common area of freedom, security and law when third countries' legal systems are apparently impeding us in this exercise.

I believe that the Commission, and specifically the Member States too, should be increasingly monitoring the extent to which the US legal system, for example, is impacting on the households of European citizens. The Commission and the Council will find themselves faced with a question from me and some of my colleagues, asking how it is possible that mail transfer data from the United States, which to all intents and purposes should be used only for customs purposes, is being passed on to the security authorities.

The confidentiality of mail is one of the last bastions we have so far been able to protect. I hope that the Commission in cooperation with the Council will be able to resolve the problem of a global approach to combating terrorism and organised crime not only from the security aspect, but also from the aspect of freedom, protection of citizens and elimination of the problems of conflicting legal systems.

Mario Borghezio (UEN). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the deputy chief editor of *Corriere della Sera*, Magdi Allam, who could hardly be accused of racism or Islamophobia, has raised a serious issue: the imams and all the requirements of the large mosque in Rome – funding and pay – are supported by the embassies of a number of Islamic countries.

Does this provide security in Europe, in one of its major capitals, against the genuine risk of the spread of extremist Islamic doctrines? I do not think so. Rather, I believe that there should be control of the spread of fundamentalist Islamic ideas closely linked to terrorism and that this is what the European Union should be looking at very carefully.

Terrorism: what do we make of the recent opinion of Advocate General of the European Court of Justice Poiares Maduro, which suggests that Regulation (EC) No 881/2002 on freezing the assets of those on the blacklist of members of Al-Qaida and the Taliban is unlawful? I would like to restate the fact that this Regulation is nothing more than the application of UN Resolution 1390, adopted by the whole international community in response to the attacks of 11 September. The civilised world wants to defend itself against the risk of terrorism: never drop your guard against the deadly threat of Islamic terrorism!

Jana Bobošíková (NI). – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that we have not made any considerable progress in the matters of freedom, security and law. On the contrary: the governments are not allowing their citizens to have their say on the Lisbon Treaty through referenda and we are therefore moving away from freedom.

Why are citizens not free to decide whether they want their country's participation in EU decision-making to diminish? Why are citizens not free to decide whether they want to see an end to their governments' vetoes in the areas of migration, energy and transport, as well as control over the European Central Bank? Why do citizens of the Member States, especially the smaller ones, not know that it is going to be practically out of the question for them to hold the rotating presidency of the European Council? Indeed, has anyone told them that in six years' time their country will lose its automatic right to have a Commissioner in the European Commission? The Reform Treaty changes the pivotal European Union documents in a fundamental way. If it is adopted just by parliaments, without referenda and nation-wide discussions, instead of freedom there

will be unrestrained arrogance of the powers that be. The European Commission should remind the governments of this.

Mihael Brejc (PPE-DE). – (SL) Firstly, I would like to thank you for the very good presentations on this fairly complicated issue we are discussing today.

I would like to use this opportunity to draw attention to another field which we have not yet dealt with sufficiently clearly. I am talking about the external borders of the European Union. All the Member States which are now in charge of the new external borders of the European Union have invested great efforts in securing these borders properly in order to protect them and ensure that the infrastructure is suitable and facilitates implementation of the Schengen standards. However, we have at the same time found that life at the border has deteriorated. I would like to draw your attention to the reduced quality of life of people at the border, especially in less developed regions, and I would like to ask whether the Council and the Commission are planning any special additional measures to improve the quality of life in border regions so as to prevent people deserting these areas. We are all very aware that if people leave border areas, i.e. if they are uninhabited spaces, they are also difficult to protect.

My second question is: At the committee meeting, the Council President mentioned that cooperation with the Balkan countries is also one of the important tasks on which the Council is focusing. In this context I am especially interested to know whether implementing the Schengen standards and securing our safety will hinder cooperation between our police forces and the police forces within the Balkan countries.

Martine Roure (PSE). – (FR) Mr President, we are at a turning point for the European Parliament in the setting up of a genuine area of freedom, security and justice, and the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon allows us to strengthen democratic and jurisdictional control. Obviously I wish to support the requests of my fellow Members to come up with a list of priorities we can work on using an early codecision procedure, on the basis of an interinstitutional political agreement.

Indeed, the full participation of the European Parliament can only improve the quality of decisions, and sometimes, as we have already seen, enable an agreement to be reached at all. Obviously this cannot happen without the national parliaments being involved in this debate, and I propose that we also bring forward the strengthened role conferred upon them by the new treaty.

Another of our priorities, of course, should be data protection. It will be no surprise to you that I am coming back to this. Indeed, you know that we encouraged the adoption of the framework decision on data protection in the third pillar. Naturally, we are pleased that the European Parliament is being consulted again on the subject. However, we are extremely concerned about the mediocre results achieved in the Council on this text, precisely because of the unanimity rule.

Given that the pillars will soon be eliminated, and to ensure true protection of the private lives of our fellow citizens, do you not think that a solution would be to modify the existing directives on data protection so that they also apply to police and judicial cooperation? It is particularly important to ensure a high level of data protection because this must also govern the proposal to establish a European PNR. This is an important question I am putting to you and I would really like an answer.

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – (NL) Mr President, first of all, I should like full transparency from the Commission and the Council regarding the ongoing negotiations with the United States on a transatlantic data protection scheme. It seems that now – at the end of the negotiation process – the Commission is going to ask the Council for a mandate. This is the wrong way round.

Secondly, the PNR dossier is starting to turn into a shambles. The need for the whole programme is far from well established. The legal basis is unclear. There is still no system for the protection of personal data in the third pillar. Yet it would seem that this has not stopped the home affairs ministers from deciding on a European PNR programme. Moreover, the European Parliament's representative, Mr Deprez, was not invited.

I should like to understand how it can be that the German Minister of Justice has at the same time declared that a European PNR programme would be contrary to the German Basic Law. In my opinion, this dossier is far from ready; the European Parliament would first like to hear why this programme is necessary.

Konrad Szymański (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, the most important event of 2007 in the area of freedom, security and justice was clearly the enlargement of the Schengen area. Today we can say that expectations of easier movement across borders have suffered a brutal collision with reality.

Movement across the Polish-German border between Saxony and Lower Silesia is now problematic because of the enlargement of the Schengen area. People are being accused at random of smuggling illegal emigrants and are being held by the police for hours on end like ordinary criminals. Such accusations are being levelled at taxi drivers in the border area. In violation of the law, they are being told to check passengers' documents. Vehicles with a Polish registration plate are being subjected to checks lasting several hours.

The Schengen Agreement is being introduced on the Polish-German border in a way that discourages people from crossing the border. This is not in line with the aim of that agreement and demands urgent action by the European Commission.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE-DE). – (RO) The efforts of the Commission and the Council to ensure the free movement of persons across Europe came to fruition in December 2007 with the extension of the Schengen area. In the field of illegal migration, the draft legislation on common standards for the repatriation of illegal immigrants from third countries and the sanctioning of illegal migrant employers are sure to help reduce this phenomenon.

Concerning legal migration, the Commission has initiated legal measures by submitting to Parliament the draft legislation on conditions for entry and residence for highly skilled workers and the single permit procedure for third-country nationals.

I would like to draw attention to a topic that I believe to be of utmost importance: transitory measures are still in force, imposed by some Member States in order to limit the movement of the labour force from other European Union Member States. It is all very well to promote a single policy to deal with legal immigration from third countries, but it is not normal to impose restrictions on EU nationals. We cannot speak about a space of freedom if there are restrictions on the freedom of movement of the work force.

In my opinion, it is obvious that the directives on legal migration from third countries should be enforced, while at the same time lifting the restrictions applied to some Member States. This can be done gradually by asking Member States that apply the legal migration Directive to repeal any labour restrictions that apply to nationals of other Member States referred to by the Directive.

Moreover, the concept of preference should be applied, so that European nationals would take precedence in meeting labour market demands. Moreover, I believe a further distinction should be drawn between third countries, where nationals of neighbouring countries, especially of those countries included in the neighbourhood policy, would have priority. I hope that the discussion between Mr Frattini and Mr Deprez that opened our debate, will lead to actual results and a positive activity on our part.

Genowefa Grabowska (PSE). – (PL) Mr President, the birth of the Lisbon Treaty and the reform of the European Union are bringing about significant changes in the area of freedom, security and justice, although these were expected by EU citizens. In particular, the subjection of this area to the competence of the European Court of Justice requires good preparation on the part of both countries and EU institutions. Parliament is aware of this and is preparing itself for the new tasks, and especially for taking the majority of decisions jointly.

In this context I would like to ask the Council: are we to begin work on a common list of priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice, and if so, when? I know that both the Council and the Commission have programmes. Parliament, through my committee, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, also knows what needs to be done. However, we need common, effective and transparent action, and a common list of priorities for the benefit of our citizens.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Portuguese Presidency for enlarging the Schengen area, and at the same time appeal for a regular evaluation of the functioning of this system. Just a few weeks in, we can already see some incidental negative consequences alongside the excellent advantages. These include the prohibitive cost of visas for citizens of third countries, particularly for Belarusians. The cost of a visa – 60 euros – is an obstacle and makes it impossible for them to visit their EU neighbours; it also makes it difficult for us to carry out our neighbourhood policy, which is after all enshrined in the Reform Treaty.

Commissioner, this requires more than just monitoring; ladies and gentlemen, this must be changed.

Ignasi Guardans Cambó (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to focus on something that may seem minor, but which has become seriously worse during 2007 and affects millions of people: security in European airports.

The European Commission and the Council have allowed and are allowing terrorism prevention in airports to be managed as if it were a transport policy.

Freedoms are being limited and rights restricted through procedures designed for the logistical and technical standards for aeroplanes and trains. As a result citizens are being left with no protection against abuse and limitations of rights are being approved with no assessment of proportionality or evaluation of effectiveness. Men and women are being treated, at times, like livestock at the checkpoints by security officers who do not know the rules they are applying or the exceptions to those rules, because the rules have been declared secret.

I ask the Commission – and Mr Frattini in particular – to re-establish their authority in this area; and I ask the Council to examine it seriously.

We have turned airports into areas in a state of emergency where neither the law nor the most basic guarantees apply, but rather police authority with no type of control.

Roselyne Lefrançois (PSE). – (FR) Mr President, I would like to mention three matters that are particularly close to my heart. The first concerns the way we are going to deal with the phase leading up to the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Like all my colleagues on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, I would like us to reach an interinstitutional agreement on bringing forward the new provisions applicable to our area of competence. Indeed, this seems to me to be the *sine qua non* for an effective and transparent collaboration. The new rules on the role of the national parliaments should also be tried out this year. As rapporteur on the Framework Decision on combating terrorism, I made a commitment to cooperate in a close and structured manner with the national parliaments.

On the subject of terrorism, an overview of the various texts already adopted would provide a better picture of their respective scope and how they relate to one another. Furthermore, whilst the fight against terrorism has to be a priority for the European Union, so must the protection of fundamental freedoms. I will therefore be extremely vigilant, when working on the framework decision, regarding the clarity of the definitions and terms used, to rule out any potential risk of infringing these freedoms, particularly freedom of expression.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about our future action on immigration. The EU has for a long time been mainly concerned with equipping itself with a veritable arsenal of laws to fight illegal immigration, though this protective attitude towards its borders has not been counterbalanced by a policy on legal immigration worthy of the name. I am therefore delighted with the initiatives adopted over the last few years in this area, and I hope that the political will to support a welcoming Europe will be as strong as it was to defend fortress Europe.

President. – We are now going into the practice that the English call ‘catch the eye’. In any case, as I am also Vice-President responsible for multilingualism, I am going to try to talk to the interpreters, my friends the interpreters, to see how the term ‘catch the eye’ can be translated into other languages.

For now we will say that whoever wishes to speak may do so, if the President gives them speaking time by ‘catch the eye’. By ‘catch the eye’, then, I grant speaking time to Mr Cavada, who I am sure has much to say to us on this subject.

Jean-Marie Cavada (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, I would first beg you to excuse this disruption to the agenda, or more precisely to the order of precedence. A train breakdown between Paris and Brussels nearly took me out of Europe, but it has been put right now, thank you.

Every year, we debate the progress that has been made on building the area of freedom, security and justice. Today, however, this debate is of particular importance and that is why I want to present the reasons that led the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to table these two oral questions, to the Council and the Commission respectively, and to press the representatives of these institutions to provide clear answers to the questions we are asking.

If this debate is important, it is because with the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon last December and its entry into force planned for 1 January 2009, the policies linked to fundamental rights and the progress made in the area of freedom, security and justice must and will undergo substantial changes, changes that Parliament – as you know, ladies and gentlemen – has been calling for incessantly for some years now.

Among these, I will mention the end of the pillar structure, allowing most of the procedures in the current third pillar to be dealt with at Community level, qualified majority voting to be generalised, the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice to be extended and the role of Parliament as colegislator to be strengthened; the Charter of Fundamental Rights to be binding.

To benefit fully from the potential offered by this new treaty, we need as of now to prepare a common interinstitutional strategy allowing us to draw up a list of the proposals to be negotiated politically in 2008 and officially adopted during the January 2008 – May 2009 period.

To conclude, Mr President, I would like to say that a strategy of this kind would mean that, once the new treaty comes into force, we will not constantly be having to amend proposals that have just been adopted, and it will guarantee full jurisdictional control for the Court of Justice and the full and complete involvement of Parliament in defining policies that go to the very core of citizens' rights.

As for the question you asked me, I am going to catch my own eye and think about it, to help you in my modest way.

Dragutin Mate, President-in-Office. – (SL) Thank you for the questions you have asked here today. Sadly, there is not enough time to answer them all in great detail, so I will try and touch on the most important ones. I will first address Mr Weber's question relating to the SIS II system.

I would like to say very clearly that we in the Council feel that security in transferring from "SIS I for all" to the SIS II system is of the utmost importance and we cannot allow data to be lost in any way or the operation of the system to be subject to any kind of threat. That is why we decided on a gradual transfer from one system to the other, which, of course, entails development of the converter. Consequently, that will somewhat prolong the period needed to bring the SIS II system into operation. I think it is a very good decision because it will ensure data security and, of course, an improvement in the quality of the data which the new system will offer, this being the most important aspect of the SIS II system.

I would further like to touch on a question posed by a number of MEPs regarding cooperation between the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. I think it is necessary for this cooperation to be close in most cases. Naturally, we need some kind of political consensus and mutual relationship in order to establish and ensure an adequate level of security and the safety of human rights. We need a valid and balanced approach, which is where the European Parliament plays an extremely significant role, and I can hardly imagine how we could operate without this close cooperation with the Parliament.

Naturally, we must be clear that the Treaty of Lisbon is still not in force. The ratification process is underway. It is a relatively sensitive process, perhaps more so in some countries than others. However, we must work and operate in a way which will not threaten the ratification process in any of the Member States of the European Union. Therefore, I think it would be wise, in this year leading to the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, to cooperate with one another and to divide the legislation we are debating into two sets. One set consists of the legislation which is nearing conclusion and on which we have Parliament's opinion, or which has been fully concluded or is in the final stages of conclusion. The other set consists of legislation which we are launching or will be launching shortly and for which we need close and regular cooperation with the Parliament. I think this is the way to find an appropriate form of cooperation to ensure adequate security and a sufficiently effective method of operation and to lay down future working practices.

I would also like briefly to mention the Returns Directive and Frontex. The technical discussions and negotiations on the Returns Directive will continue during the Slovenian Presidency and we have also agreed to hold political negotiations. I hope, therefore, that we will find the necessary and appropriate political compromise. I still hope that it will be reached and we have already been in touch with the rapporteur, Mr Weber, leading me to believe that the matter is progressing well.

Regarding Frontex, I would simply say that the evaluation of the Frontex work is in progress and the Presidency is planning a more detailed discussion at ministerial level during the conference at the beginning of March, when we will talk about Frontex and its future and evaluate its work so far. After that discussion we will be able to give Parliament a more detailed report.

Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the Commission – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that this morning's debate has shown a shared willingness to work together on the part of all three institutions. Therefore, not only is the working method important, but so is the merit. So the wish expressed at the start

by Mr Deprez, on which I would say there was a broad consensus including from the President of the Council, and which I personally agree with, is the right working method to use.

As I said at the start, in the Council the idea of working to a timescale not limited to six months has proved a success. We should try to use it here too, because I think, from what people have said, that a number of subjects have emerged that are clearly a priority. The fact that we cannot slow down the work towards setting up SIS II – the new generation of the SIS system – is apparent to everyone. We need to go forward and, beyond the discussion of timescale, what concerns us is that the process of trialling this new system is showing it to be truly of added value for the security of our external borders.

Rather than talk about delay, I would talk about the need for the Member States – something I agree with – to trial the system in depth to see how it works and could work better, before actually rolling it out. The timescales we have been discussing with the Presidency, and which we will formalise with the February Council of Ministers in a few weeks' time, are timescales that demonstrate our commitment to the added value from the new generation of SIS, something that is clearly a priority.

Many people have spoken about assessing the effectiveness of security measures, particularly counter-terrorism measures. This is something Parliament asked for, which I agreed to a year ago. Today we have an exercise under way. In December, all the Member States received a detailed questionnaire about the results achieved by the counter-terrorism measures being applied. I can say, not only to Baroness Ludford but to all of you, that by mid-April I will be able to publish in full the results of this analysis for all 27 Member States. This, I believe, is another priority matter for discussion, something this Parliament has always been interested in.

Some people have talked about procedural safeguards. You know that no agreement was reached on this because some Member States put insurmountable problems in the way, but now the Slovenian Presidency has raised something that I think could be dealt with as a priority: the matter of judgments in absentia. This is one of the aspects related to procedural safeguards. It is not the whole discussion, but it is an extremely important aspect: harmonising the rules on judgments in absentia – a matter I think Mrs Lambert touched on – is a matter that deserves to be dealt with as a priority in 2008.

We have already mentioned the assessment of Frontex. On 13 February we will publish our first comprehensive assessment of Frontex. Clearly, the Commission document will be discussed in the Council and in Parliament, and will form the basis for action, which I would also say is a priority, in 2008: how Frontex has worked, how we can improve it, how we can encourage Member States to participate more.

Terrorism was spoken of; many people mentioned it. Terrorist propaganda on the Internet and violent radicalisation are both matters that will be the subject of non-legislative initiatives. A few legislative measures are already planned, there will be communications from the Commission and it is worth debating.

I much appreciated what Mrs Roure said about the European PNR. This is a discussion that will continue throughout 2008. I do not believe that we will have adopted the European PNR by the end of this year. However, I believe that three criteria – mentioned by Mrs Roure if I am not mistaken – should guide us: proportionality in the collection of these data and their added value for the fight against terrorism, because this is what we are dealing with. If this instrument works, we will adopt it, if it does not work we will adapt it or else we will not adopt it. I personally believe it will be useful, but I think we need to discuss it here. And then there is the matter of how to protect the data collected and how to punish anyone who misuses these data. These are matters for discussion, obviously open, that we can tackle during 2008.

Lastly, immigration. I believe that we should now continue with the general approach to immigration, as the European Council in December said, to think, in view of the future French Presidency, about what the French Government intends to propose as a European pact on immigration, and I have already planned for the Commission to be fully available to work on this matter.

Finally again, asylum policy. 2008 will be decisive, since 2010 is the deadline for setting up a European asylum system. 2008 will be the year in which the action plan will be presented to the Commission.

I have given examples to show how, in this spirit, Mr Deprez's proposal, which I think should be welcomed, is to get together and define in concrete terms what can be done immediately because it is ready – and there are many things we can conclude during the Slovenian Presidency – and what we can continue to discuss between now and, say, June 2009.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – Mr President, I note with some surprise and regret that, first of all, the Council has not replied to any question on PNR. I wonder if it would agree here to give us written replies to all the questions that have been put here.

Secondly, I note – again with regret – that for a year now we have been asking about information about the high-level contact group and the negotiations between the Commission and the Americans on data protection. Again, we have not received a reply. They have been negotiating for a year, and I think it is high time that they tell us what they are negotiating about. I would like a written reply.

President. – Thank you Mrs in 't Veld. I think that both the Commission and the Council have taken note of what you said and I am sure that they will provide written answers to the requests that you have just made.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the March part-session.

5. Cooperation between the special intervention units of the Member States (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on the report by Mr França, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, on the initiative of the Republic of Austria with a view to adopting a Council decision on the improvement of cooperation between the special intervention units of the Member States of the European Union in crisis situations (15437/2006 – C6-0058/2007 – 2007/0803(CNS)) (A6-0507/2007).

Armando França, rapporteur. – (PT) The face of the old Europe has changed. Today the European Union, with 27 Member States and nearly 500 million inhabitants, is facing complex and stimulating challenges, requiring us to adopt an ever broader world view and a stance that is very attentive to issues such as peacekeeping, security, stability, freedom and the exercise of democracy. As immortalised by Victor Hugo's wisdom, it requires us to know how much of the future can be introduced into the present, as the secret of great government. It is therefore the scope and major challenge of this report – the challenge of the security of persons and property in the EU area – and is an issue in the everyday lives of Europeans. I am talking about security, specifically, today and tomorrow, every day, in the streets, at work, at leisure and at home, on land, at sea, in the air. It is the security of our common space that, without being imposed, guarantees and underpins freedom in a balanced society.

Freedom is a cornerstone, a fundamental value of the Union; security is a tool in the service of well-being, it offers stability and safeguards freedom. Freedom as a value and security as a tool are essential to the European project. Austria's initiative, taken up by the Portuguese Presidency and which gave rise to the Council Decision, provides for the improvement of cooperation between the special intervention units of the European Union in crisis situations. It is a good and necessary initiative. This initiative also complements Prüm, since that Treaty provides for cooperation only in the event of natural disasters or serious accidents. My report proposed 11 amendments to the proposal for a decision which also establishes a minimum general framework for possible cooperation in man-made crises, hijacking, terrorist attacks, etc.; i.e. man-made crisis situations presenting a serious direct physical threat to persons, property, infrastructure or institutions.

In the proposal, cooperation in terms of training, preparation and action by special intervention units is always a possibility and the Member State may or may not request cooperation, indicating what type of assistance it requires. The effectiveness and promptness of interventions will always depend on the degree of preparedness, coordination, linkage and the existence of uniform methods in the *modus operandi* of the intervention units, which is why I propose, firstly, the possibility of joint training and exercises, and secondly, that the training and exercises be funded from the budget of the European Union, pursuant to Articles 30, 32 and 34 of the Treaty on European Union. I would also point out that, in our understanding, the rules on civil and criminal liability applicable in the event of joint operations must be the same as in the Prüm Decision.

Mr President, fellow Members, this Council Decision is very important. It is a common solution to common issues and threats facing all Member States. It is a solution that values the essential cooperation in preparing for and reacting to man-made crises, which are always unforeseen but always possible. Finally, I would like to highlight and offer my thanks for the institutional and technical cooperation I have been given and draw attention to the amendments proposed by Mr Díaz de Mera, Mr Demetriou and Mrs Iotova which have improved and enriched my draft report.

Franco Frattini, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I have supported this Austrian initiative, very well relaunched by the Portuguese Presidency, since the very beginning.

I firmly believe that practical and operational cooperation between special intervention units in the European Union is very important in order to deal with the threatening situation.

First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr França, for the excellent work he has done on this dossier, and also the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs as a whole for the very useful amendments which are contained in the report.

I welcome the amendments suggested by Parliament which are aimed at improving the initiative. I would just like to mention the amendments to make sure that there is no overlap with the Prüm Decision or questions relating to fine-tuning the liability provisions or to redefining and clarifying the term 'crisis situations' or an amendment referring to the possibility of obtaining funding for common projects.

It should be remembered that special intervention units currently operate under the ATLAS network. They carry out joint training and exercises and we fund such projects. We have funded such activities from our budget since 2006 and my proposal for 2008 is to increase that funding for ATLAS up to EUR 900 000.

In conclusion, I reiterate my support for this report and I strongly wish for rapid progress on this dossier and quick adoption also by the Council.

Mihael Brejc, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (SL) This decision regarding cooperation between the Member States' special units for intervention in crisis situations is one of many documents which should increase the readiness and capability of the Member States to respond adequately to crisis situations, such as acts of terrorism. Action in crisis situations and in the fight against terrorism is a complex task that demands good cooperation among all the Member States.

A lot has been done so far in terms of establishing political and legal foundations and taking practical preventive measures. However, we have not adequately tackled the causes and roots of terrorism. That is why I am repeating my suggestion that the Council and the Commission should pay more attention to the roots and causes of terrorism. The first steps made in the field of information exchange have also been good, but not sufficient. So far, the difficulty has been in the substantial formal obstacles which would arise if a Member State in a crisis situation, say under terrorist attack, asked another Member State for help.

To take more effective action in crisis situations, it is necessary for the authorities in the Member States to cooperate with each other. In particular, it is necessary for their special units to be familiar with and cooperate with one other. This decision opens up scope for cooperation in the event of the most serious acts of terrorism, i.e. in real crisis situations. It enables a State, when asked, to provide help through its special units. This will in no way threaten the sovereignty of the other State, it will simply be helping it. This is important not only because of circumstances in practice, but also because it enforces one of the fundamental values of the European Union – solidarity. My Group supports this decision and we hope that it will receive a huge vote in favour. I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr França, for his fine work.

Bogusław Rogalski, *on behalf of the UEN group*. – (PL) Mr President, in discussing the draft legislative resolution on the initiative of the Republic of Austria with a view to adopting a Council decision on the improvement of cooperation between the special intervention units of the Member States of the European Union in crisis situations, one must bear in mind that no single Member State has all the means, resources and expertise at its disposal to deal effectively with all possible kinds of large scale threats or crisis situations requiring special intervention. It is therefore of crucial importance that each Member State be able to request the assistance of another Member State. This is particularly important first and foremost in combating terrorism, organised crime and cross-border crime and in the event of disasters and serious accidents.

I also hope, and this must be borne in mind, that Parliament's amendment will introduce a material safeguard against the unauthorised expansion of these simplified rules for cooperation 'by analogy' to the interactions with the agencies of third countries, in order to prevent abuses in, for example, dubious interventions, and so that such interventions are not in breach of Member States' rights.

Athanasios Pafilis, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Mr President, the Austrian initiative and the Commission's report aim to further strengthen cooperation between special intervention units of the EU Member States and the organisation of joint operations in each Member State, allegedly to combat terrorist attacks. These operations are already included in the Prüm Convention, under which police forces will be

completely free to intervene and carry out pursuit operations in the territory of each Member State, even with the use of arms.

For some years now the European Union has been a breeding ground of 'terror hysteria', insecurity and fear of an unseen enemy. Fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms are being drastically curtailed, allegedly in order to combat this enemy.

But who in fact is the enemy of the European Union? We have been hearing about terrorism for so many years; in reality, the European Union is trying to shield its policies and protect its economic and political system against opposition from the workers. Indeed, the report itself admits this. Whatever it says about terrorism and the like is theoretical: it legalises intervention and joint police operations even, so it claims, in cases where there is only a suspicion of criminal acts having been committed, or of a threat to property belonging to state infrastructures or organisations, or of unspecified offences. It is precisely this deliberately vague wording that can be used to justify intervention; it can even suppress traditional forms of popular mobilisation or protest, such as, for example, the symbolic take-over of roads and public buildings, large-scale strikes and the organisation of strike rallies.

Such, we believe, is the report's aim, and this is why we disagree. We oppose it. We are voting against the initiative and the report, and we call upon citizens to protect their individual and democratic rights.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, specialists able to carry out tasks with an increased risk of danger doubtless make a valuable contribution to security – on that we are agreed! – just as planned and improved cooperation is an advantage in the event of a terrorist threat. Current developments are in some ways alarming, precisely because of the rising crime rate. Police stations are being closed and special units reduced while we are increasingly having to fight ever more unscrupulous criminal gangs rubbing their hands together with glee every time another border opens up. In this situation the EU still wants it to be as difficult as possible for responsible citizens to protect themselves with weapons and has contributed, with its mistaken multicultural visions, to a multi-crime society with no-go areas and the propensity to violence on the increase.

It is, of course, important that in preparing for a terrorist act the fight against criminal activity should not suffer. In my opinion we should put an end to the nonsense of siphoning off police officers for terrorist units and closing functioning special units only to create new special units – against gangs of youths, for instance.

Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, unlike the previous speakers, I welcome this initiative and would preface it with the saying: 'good things take time!' This is because the Austrian initiative dates from an initiative by the Heads of State or Government in 2004 and addresses the issue of how each of the Member States can best be supported by special units in the event of a terrorist attack. It therefore has nothing to do with the matter raised by the previous speaker, nor do I understand the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, which simply dismisses this kind of initiative of mutual support through the use of special units.

We know that no Member State can in fact be permanently protected against all eventualities. Therefore, with this initiative Parliament has also been trying to find ways to provide the best possible, but above all the most rapid, cross-border assistance in a special case of this kind, and particularly in the event of terrorist attacks, hostage-taking and hijacking.

I particularly welcome Parliament's additional proposals because they make it easier to decide who, for example, should bear the costs at the end of the day, namely the Member State asking for help, or to decide which regulations should apply if officials are active in another Member State. This also includes regulations on liability. I welcome the fact that there are also joint training courses for combining these special units and then for improving their deployment, too, should they be needed. I congratulate the rapporteur. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats will be supporting this initiative.

President. – I can only grant speaking time by 'catch the eye' to Members who have not previously spoken during the debate, and I do not see anyone who has not spoken asking me for speaking time.

In addition, Mr Frattini has told me that he does not intend to speak on behalf of the Commission. Let us therefore give the rapporteur, Mr França, two minutes' speaking time to close this debate.

Armando França, rapporteur. – (PT) I would first like to express my thanks for the references to my work, to the report and to colleagues on the committee of which I am a member, to Mr Frattini and the other

Members who expressed their support for the report and for Austria's initiative and the decision by the Council and the Portuguese Presidency to continue it.

I would like to stress one aspect that seems very important to me. In this area, security – I repeat – security is a tool, it is not a value; it is a tool in the service of freedom and in the service of the effective and positive exercise of the fundamental rights specifically of EU citizens. And another aspect that seems no less important to me is that this decision will not favour any intervention, as was said here; this decision will promote a fundamental aspect of EU integration, namely cooperation between the Member States, and will also promote cooperation on joint training and exercises, and hence on prevention. Only when Member States ask one another will there be a possibility of action in specific crisis situations that arise and this will of course have to be assessed by the Member States concerned.

I also proposed support from the EU budget mainly to stimulate and foster cooperation in this area, as well as to provide some financial support to Member States that need it.

Finally, I would like to say that it is important to implement, execute and expedite it because crisis situations that threaten our security and hence our freedom in an EU Member State, can arise at any time, any day and undermine the confidence of all the EU's 500 million citizens.

President. – Mr França, congratulations on your excellent report.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at 11 a.m.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Marianne Mikko (PSE), in writing. – Together we have been working towards minimising the necessity of special intervention units. However good the units and their cooperation are, an ounce of prevention is still better than a pound of cure.

I believe that the certainty of coordinated and powerful response will go a long way towards making any hostage takers, terrorists or desperate criminals think twice.

This means that there should be no unnecessary obstacles, no incentives to compromise our security for the sake of procedural rules.

I think it is possible that the currently envisaged network of bilateral agreements will serve our needs adequately. Only close neighbours can guarantee rapid reaction, which mostly goes together with the need for special intervention.

On the other hand, in the case that several Member States are attacked simultaneously, as is the clear possibility with cyber-attacks, we do need transparency and a certain consistency of arrangements throughout the European Union.

This report is a part of complex equation, the result of which might change as new data comes in. We should not view the current arrangement as permanent one. We must be ready to develop this cooperation into a Community policy.

My congratulations to the rapporteur.

(The sitting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

President

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, yesterday a comment was made by Martin Schulz to another Member here in the House – Hans-Peter Martin – the substance of which was very specific. The President cannot therefore accept the substance of this statement. I am disallowing the substance and am censuring the substance of this statement.

6. Membership of committees and delegations: see Minutes

7. Approval of Minutes of previous sitting: see Minutes

8. Voting time

President. – The next item is voting time.

(For results and other details of the votes: see Minutes)

8.1. Interpretation of Rule 19(1) (vote)

– *Before the vote*

Nigel Farage, on behalf of the IND/DEM Group. – Mr President, I rise under Rule 170(4) to make the point that this proposal that we are being asked to vote on gives the President of this Parliament such arbitrary and dictatorial powers that no one who believes in democracy would ever even consider it. But to be asked to vote on it, when the political groups in this Parliament have not even had time to discuss it, surely cannot be right. So I ask that this vote be adjourned to the next part-session in Strasbourg so that people actually get a chance to understand the huge implications of this vote if it is passed.

President. – Mr Farage, firstly, you are entitled to ask for the matter to be adjourned. Nobody is questioning this right. We did briefly discuss the substance of the issue yesterday, however, after Mr Hannan asked for leave to speak. I would say to you very clearly that the substance of your statement, in which you refer to dictatorial measures, is inappropriate here. Accept the majority decision of this Parliament, accept the majority decision of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs! Everything here proceeds properly, according to the law, and you should be good democrats and accept it.

Martin Schulz, on behalf of the PSE Group. – (DE) Mr President, our Group has discussed this issue very thoroughly. We believe that the President should consult the House once again prior to the decision, particularly with regard to how the revised version is worded, since accusations of authoritarian action are completely unjustified. Far from it! There is no reason at all in this regard to make use of wording as the last speaker has done. Please may we therefore proceed with the vote as you have proposed.

President. – I was rather too quick. A formal proposal has been filed. One Member is able to speak in favour of the proposal and one against. We have listened to the speaker who is critical of the proposal. Someone in favour of it can now speak. I assume that Mr Hannan wishes to support Mr Farage. For this reason he and he alone now has the floor. Please proceed, Mr Hannan.

Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE). – Mr President, an absolute majority is not the same as the rule of law. I accept that there is a minority in this House in favour of a referendum, and that there is a minority in this House against the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

But this House must nonetheless follow its own rule books. And by popular acclamation to discard the rules under which we operate is indeed an act of arbitrary and despotic rule. It is only my regard for you, Mr President, and my personal affection for you that prevents me from likening it to the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* of 1933, which was also voted through by a parliamentary majority.

I ask this House not to vote on this matter until we have ...

(Protests)

President. – Mr Hannan, I do believe we ought not to adopt these comparisons.

Joseph Daul (PPE-DE). – (FR) Mr President, I have been patient for several days, for several weeks. Now, there are limits. We have not yet taken a decision within our group. This comment is intolerable. We are going to take internal sanctions within the group and I am going to ask for Mr Hannan to be excluded from the group.

(Applause)

(Parliament rejected Mr Farage's request for the vote to be adjourned).

8.2. (A6-0511/2007, Michael Cashman) Control of persons at external borders (vote)

8.3. (A6-0509/2007, Panayiotis Demetriou) Control of persons at external borders based on unilateral recognition by the Member States of certain residence permits issued by Switzerland and Liechtenstein (vote)

8.4. (A6-0001/2008, Philippe Morillon) Statistics on aquaculture (vote)

8.5. (A6-0507/2007, Armando França) Cooperation between the special intervention units of the Member States (vote)

8.6. (A6-0005/2008, Umberto Guidoni) The European research area: new perspectives (vote)

8.7. (A6-0505/2007, Markus Ferber) Accomplishment of the internal market in Community postal services (vote)

8.8. Situation in Iran (vote)

– Before the vote

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, I would just like to say that my Group supports the groups that put forward the motion for a joint resolution and will endorse it.

– Before the vote on paragraph 6

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I am sorry my amendments are being moved in this special way because of technical problems. I ask for support in replacing one word. So ‘potential military use’ would become ‘potential military link’.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on paragraph 9

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, it is again very simple. The insertion of one word: ‘sincere cooperation’.

(The oral amendment was not accepted.)

– Before the vote on Amendment 9

Paulo Casaca (PSE). – Mr President, I regret to announce to the House that Mr Zamel Bawi, whose execution we asked to be stopped, was executed at 4 a.m. yesterday in Karoon prison in Ahwaz. Therefore I am moving an oral amendment to Mr Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra’s existing amendment, on which I hope to obtain his agreement. The oral amendment relates to this execution and states that one of the inmates on death row is actually a European citizen, who was kidnapped from Syria. The other two are UNHCR refugees who had already obtained asylum in Norway.

The oral amendment reads as follows: ‘Protests vehemently against the execution in Iran on 30 January 2008 at 4 a.m. local time of the Ahwazi activist Zamel Bawi, the 19th Ahwazi activist executed in the last 12 months, and urges the Iranian government to desist from executing the Dutch citizen and human-rights activist Faleh Abdulah al-Mansouri and the UNHCR-registered refugees Rasoul Ali Mazrea and Said Saki, whose resettlement to Norway has been secured, as well as to allow them to proceed to their countries of citizenship or refuge’. Then it continues as before: ‘calls for the release of the Kurdish journalists Abdolvahed “Hiwa” Butimar and Adnan Hassanpour who have been sentenced to death’.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on paragraph 15

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, when we mention all forms of torture, I propose inserting ‘including extremely inhumane executions’ because these occur, particularly executions with torture.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on paragraph 17

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, this relates to existing text. The text already ‘calls for minorities to be able to exercise all rights granted by the Iranian Constitution’. But even rights according to their own Constitution are not granted. So I propose the last part of the text should begin ‘urges the Iranian authorities to act constitutionally and eliminate, in law and in practice, all forms of discrimination’. The rest would be unchanged. Thus they should act according to their own Constitution, which is not respected.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on paragraph 19

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I agree to withdraw this oral amendment because it is complementary to the consensus that has already been agreed. Paragraph 19 is about disregard by the Council and Commission of the ruling of the European Court. It has already been agreed in a compromise, so I agree to withdraw it.

– Before the vote on Amendment 3

Alejo Vidal-Quadras (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, in a resolution of this political importance we are convinced that it is very helpful to have as much support and agreement in the House as possible.

With this in mind, we are proposing an oral amendment that would remove any value judgment from the original amendment and would make it a simple reference to a specific fact, which we could call a ‘relevant fact’ relating to the subject of the resolution, but, I repeat, eliminating any value judgment in order to achieve maximum support from the House.

The oral amendment would replace the text of the amendment with the following: ‘notes the judgment of the Court of First Instance of the European Communities of 12 December 2006.’ In other words, a simple mention, with no value judgment, of a relevant fact.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on Recital C

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I apologise. A technical problem caused my amendments to appear in such a special way. I am not such an *enfant terrible* as to torture you here.

But anyway, as they are tabled, I have to present them now. It is about the implementation of the additional protocol which Iran was urged to implement at the earliest possible date. My proposal is to add ‘which is not yet the case’.

(The oral amendment was not accepted.)

– Before the vote on Recital H

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, there is a very unpleasant use of cranes for public hangings, especially hangings including torture. So it is my proposal to insert after the words ‘often by public hanging’: ‘for which cranes provided by Western companies are used’.

We are not pleased by it. I imagine nobody is pleased at this.

(The oral amendment was not accepted.)

– After Recital R

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE). – Mr President, this is an important amendment on which I ask for the attention of the House, because our own people and the citizens of the EU are endangered by some activities.

So, a new recital: ‘whereas several EU Member States are participants in an international action to build democracy in Iraq and defend its people from terrorists trained and supplied also by outside powers, including

Iran, which means that servicemen from EU Member States – citizens of the EU – are suffering losses and injuries caused by terrorist attacks to which Iran is not unconnected'.

Please give your support.

(The oral amendment was not accepted.)

8.9. Outcome of the Bali climate change conference (vote)

8.10. (A6-0003/2008, Fiona Hall) Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential (vote)

– Before the vote on the motion for a resolution

Godfrey Bloom (IND/DEM). – Mr President, I rise under Rule 151(3) to ask whether we have legitimacy, in fact, to vote on this. I had the pleasure of your company last evening at 5 o'clock, when the temperature in your office was 80°F. This whole building is overheated. The building in Strasbourg is overheated, and I would suggest that we put our own house in order before we start voting on other things.

President. – I have not felt this heat. Perhaps this had something to do with your inner reality.

8.11. (A6-0495/2007, Carl Schlyter) Reduction in unwanted by-catches and elimination of discards in European fisheries (vote)

8.12. A European strategy on the Roma (vote)

– Before the vote on Amendment 9

Roberta Angelilli (UEN). – *(IT)* Mr President, I wanted to remove the words 'traditional practices' from the oral amendment, that is, the last two words of paragraph 9. If you wish I can read the text that remains: 'calls on the Roma to respect human rights, in particular with regard to women and children, avoiding forced marriages'.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

(Amendment 9 was subsequently rejected.)

IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

Vice-President

9. Membership of committees and delegations: see Minutes

10. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

- Interpretation of the Rules of Procedure (Rule 19 (1))

Richard Corbett (PSE). – Mr President, you will have to excuse the fact that I have lost my voice. I wish to state that I voted in favour of this interpretation and I want to say that Mr Hannan's comparison, while pretending not to make it, of our vote with Hitler's *Ermächtigungsgesetz* of 1933 was an absolutely disgraceful comparison.

But such a ludicrous comparison just shows the state of mind of the person making it. We have simply confirmed, in accordance with our rules, that Rule 19 of our Rules of Procedure already gives the President of Parliament the right to bring an end to successive uses of points of order, procedural motions etc., 'where the President is convinced that these are manifestly intended to cause and will result in a prolonged and serious obstruction of the procedures of the House or the rights of other Members'.

This is not stifling debate. We have ample speaking time in debates, shared out proportionally to every group in accordance with their size. This is simply a safeguard against those who are trying to disrupt this House.

The powers that our President has are far less than what exists in most national parliaments, if you take the Speaker of the House of Commons, for instance. We are right to take that safeguard measure, and I note that the former leader of Mr Hannan's party, a member of our committee, actually voted in favour of that, so his attitude is disgraceful.

President. – (FR) Ladies and gentlemen, the rule is as follows.

When explanations of vote have begun on a subject, in principle – and I say in principle – the President does not accept any more speakers on that subject but, in view of the sensitivity and the subject, I propose to depart from this rule and allow all Members who have asked to speak to do so.

Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, in view of the fact that the first roll-call vote on a change to the Rules of Procedure was not reflected in our documents, a certain error has crept in. I am speaking here on my own behalf, and also on behalf of Mr Czarnecki and Mr Libicki. We voted in favour of Mr Farage's request by raising our hands, and we thought that the roll-call vote also related to this, and a mistake came about here. We therefore wish to correct this here verbally. At the same time we are electronically registering a change in our vote to the counter-proposal.

Bogdan Pęk (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, the same question: we here, in a group of several Members, voted against our own convictions; we should in fact have voted against this amendment to the Rules of Procedure, which is a distinctly non-democratic amendment; here in the heart of democratic Europe a rule is being introduced which hands absolute power to the President of Parliament. Such far-reaching solutions are not present in any democratic Parliament, so we wished to vote against this, but owing to the mistake referred to by Mr Piotrowski, we voted in favour of it. This concerns Bogdan Pęk, Dariusz Grabowski and Andrzej Zapałowski.

Dariusz Maciej Grabowski (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, as the previous speaker said, I too am asking for my vote on the Rules of Procedure to be changed. I voted out of line with my own convictions, so please could this be altered. I am against the change to the Rules of Procedure.

Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE). – Mr President, may I thank you for your very wise interpretation of your new powers in allowing us to make explanations of vote even if we did not put our name down for this report? May I also thank you for allowing Mr Corbett an extra half a minute to make a political aside that might not have been truly relevant to the subject of the matter?

I just rise to say that I really do think this is an aberration of our Rules of Procedure. I am very concerned about it. I have been in communication with the Presidency, and I hope the Presidency respects the views of the minority of this Parliament. Mr Corbett made the statement that we had the opportunity to rise within debates in this House because all groups get speaking time. Alas, as we have seen today, sometimes some groups are not as tolerant of different views as others. It is very difficult to get speaking time for those Members that might express a minority view in a big group. Thank you very much indeed for allowing us to make this point.

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, I too was led astray. I thought we were checking the previous vote. I am definitely against this interpretation of Article 19, which ranks procedural matters above principles and rights, particularly freedom of speech.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Mr President, thank you very much for showing discretion on this matter and allowing me to take the floor to offer my explanation of vote.

I did understand what I was voting for on this issue, and I clearly voted against. I understand that some people in this House interpret the Rules and I understand that to mean that we are within our Rules on this.

But what I would say is that we always have to be very careful about giving arbitrary powers to a chairman or a president. I am sure that the President and the Vice-Presidents of this current Parliament will use these powers with extreme caution, and I am sure we welcome that. But what of future presidents? What of future chairmen who choose to interpret these rules as they see fit, to frown upon dissent and to suppress it?

We have to be careful that this is not a slippery slope, or perceived to be a slippery slope, to dictatorship, rather than a diversity of views. Therefore, I say to everyone, the true test of a democracy is how you treat your minorities, and, if you treat your minorities well, then we can all be agreed that this is a true democracy.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I have never so far used the word ‘dictatorial’ in connection with the European institutions despite all my criticism over the years. I think and am convinced that what has become possible today owing to this unbelievably far-reaching empowerment of the President is opening the floodgates to despotism. We cannot always assume – and certainly not in this House – that the President will always act in an even-handed and well-balanced manner. As a result of the decision that was made here and against which I voted, of course, the President now has unbelievable arbitrary power and this Parliament will therefore be able to mutate into an arbitrary Parliament. The citizens of Europe do not deserve this! I believe it has quite clearly gone beyond a rift here and this will lead to major democratic problems.

- Report: Armando França (A6-0507/2007)

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I am sorry. I was temporarily delayed by a colleague. We were discussing democracy: a very important concept that I am sure we all support in this House, even though we do not always act that way.

I understand about the amendments to this report in terms of cooperation between the different special intervention units, but we have to remember that this is actually an amendment to the Prüm Treaty. The British Conservatives originally opposed the Prüm Treaty. The reason that we opposed it was because, initially, it was an agreement on cooperation between a limited number of Member States. Under the presidency of one of the Member States, they decided to extend this provision without proper consultation. Even the European Data Protection Supervisor had to submit his own opinion after he realised he was not consulted.

We as Conservatives are against the use of rapid border intervention units and the implementation of the Prüm Treaty, and we did not support the amendments to this Treaty.

- Report: Markus Ferber (A6-0505/2007)

Jim Higgins (PPE-DE). – Mr President, my Irish PPE-DE colleagues now fully support the liberalisation of the postal services within the Union, and we voted accordingly. We do so knowing that universal service is guaranteed to all citizens within the Union, and that specific measures have been taken to ensure that rural and sparsely populated areas are served by an adequate number of postal outlets.

(GA) Mr President, I should also like to stress that it is equally important to have postal services for the visually impaired and the blind. My Irish EPP-ED colleagues and myself appeal to all Member States to maintain readily available *nationwide* postal services or to set up such services in countries where they are not provided at present.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Mr Chairman, today, after many years, our discussions have come to an end and we have agreed to provide all citizens of the European Union with a fully open market in postal services. This is an important milestone on the road towards a single postal services market and does not threaten public services. I am glad that we have reached a sensible compromise, for example postal deliveries to remote areas are preserved.

Furthermore, the Directive does not prevent the Member States from maintaining a number of exceptional measures, for example free postal services for partially sighted persons, although today Parliament rejected a specific article in this regard.

The advent of new electronic means of communications is having a fundamental influence on changes to the structure of the demand for postal services; liberalisation will thus lead to a better, and in particular more flexible, response to a wider range of services for postal items. I believe that this will also result in lower prices in return for more efficient services and I congratulate us on this compromise.

Zita Pleštinová (PPE-DE). – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, I regret very much that Amendment 3, identical to Amendment 18, concerning free postal services for blind or partially sighted people, was not incorporated in the Ferber report. Being blind or partially sighted is a disability that makes it impossible to see the world through one's eyes. However, I believe that these people will hear the 321 voices of those Members who voted for this amended Directive with their hearts. Since the Directive was adopted at second reading, I believe that the Member States will, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, solve this problem to the satisfaction of people who are blind or partially sighted.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Mr President, before I became a Member of the European Parliament, I had a real job. One job I had was advising companies on the newly liberalised industries – the telecoms industry, the postal industry (to a limited extent) and the energy industry. What we saw in telecoms liberalisation was an explosion in choice. We saw an explosion in innovation. We saw competition leading to lower prices and consumers and businesses across Europe, which led to great innovation and great choice for all consumers. Let us hope that, with this directive, what we will now see is the same sort of market discipline that was applied to the telecom sector spread to the postal sector; that we will enjoy a spread of wealth, innovation and better services right across Europe; and that, at the end of the day, it will be the consumer who wins.

Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I would like to associate my comments with the latter part of Mr Kamall's statement because I truly believe that liberalisation in the postal services market is the way forward for innovation and consumer choice.

I have a significant problem, though, with the definition of universal services and how that is applied to rural services. Earlier this week, in my own constituency in the UK, there was an announcement that seven post offices would close. This was after a massive consultation. Some of these post offices were profitable. The consultation reports stated that nearly 100% of people were in favour of keeping these post offices open. However, because of a definition of what service was required by government, the consultation turned into a sham, everybody was ignored. Rural services will be decimated in places like Staverton, Hellidon, Brington and Harlestone, and Milton Malsor in my constituency.

So I am very concerned about the implementation of this directive within Member States.

Motion for a resolution: Situation in Iran (B6-0046/2008)

Zita Pleštinšá (PPE-DE). – (SK) Mr President, I should like it to be recorded that I wanted to vote for the motion for a resolution on the situation in Iran, only I did not hear the interpretation properly at the time of the roll-call vote and in the final vote I did not press my voting button.

- Motion for a resolution: Outcome of the Bali Conference on Climate Change (B6-0059/2008)

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Mr Chairman, I am convinced that humans should reduce their negative impact on the climate of this planet. Not only the Union but the whole world must be included in the process of slowing down climatic change.

That is why in our development policy we must strive to achieve more efficient tools and provide help to developing countries in such a way that will enable them to adjust to the impact of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is one of the next important tasks we are facing, tasks highlighted in today's resolution on the Bali Conference.

- Report: Fiona Hall (A6-0003/2008)

Milan Gaľa (PPE-DE). – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to say that as an owner of a small hydropower plant I do know what production of electricity from renewable sources means. Unfortunately, I also know a lot about the problems, often artificially created, faced by people who want to produce and distribute energy in this way.

I also own a somewhat old family home. I carried out extensive renovations of this house in 2001, using my own funds, in order to achieve a higher standard of energy efficiency. I know that a kilowatt saved is as good as a kilowatt produced. I welcome the Action Plan for Energy Efficiency (and I supported it with my vote) for many of the reasons stated here. That said, I very much regret that the European Commission as well as many governments of the Member States are guilty of neglecting energy-saving measures and continuously underestimating their strategic importance and the need to make them a political priority.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) Mr Chairman, I welcome the report on the Action Plan for Energy Efficiency. It calls for financial support in order to introduce as soon as possible leading-edge technologies that help to save the environment. It will also result in less dependency on energy supply from the East.

The emission permit trading system is nevertheless controversial. It could fulfil its purpose if the individual countries of the Union were starting from the same place. Special conditions must apply to the less-developed economies, such as the Czech economy. It is also necessary to provide support to improve the energy efficiency of newly constructed buildings. This may be the most efficient way of reversing the trend because

year after year the increase in energy consumption is still higher than the savings made by applying energy-saving technologies, and this will continue in the future.

The public-private partnership will support research into, and practical application of, energy-saving technologies in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy. The requirement for appliances to be labelled with energy-related information must not be a bureaucratic burden on manufacturers and the information must not misguide consumers.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Mr President, unlike the previous colleague who spoke, I do not own my own power station, but I do own a very old house – an 1840s house – and it is a wonderful house. If you are ever in London, you are most welcome to drop in for a cup of tea. But what I would like to say is that, whatever one feels about climate change, I think we can all be in favour of the need for energy efficiency.

You may not realise this, but I represent London, the greatest city in the world, capital of the greatest country in the world. We have a number of office blocks and buildings that leave their lights on at night. That is a sign of success, but they should be aware of energy efficiency.

We also have a number of establishments for the hospitality industry – restaurants and pubs – and recently, due to smoking bans, they have been forced to use patio heaters to accommodate their customers who wish to sit outside and have a cigarette. What worries me is that it is a completely disproportionate measure to ban the use of these patio heaters, which contribute less than 0.1% to CO₂ emissions. So let us get this in context. We all need better energy efficiency, but let us have solutions that are workable.

Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE). – Mr President, like everyone in this House I know the statistics that are commonly available, that prove that we could save ourselves a ton of energy and a ton of problems in the future if we were more efficient about the way we use energy.

I did not vote on this report, because I forgot to make a declaration of interest – of financial interest, no less. Under paragraph 22, it calls for getting rid of fixed-cost systems by which people buy their energy, be it electricity or gas. I have signed up to a fixed-cost system in the United Kingdom. I signed up to it because it is easy to budget for my energy bills, and millions of people – generally poor people – in the United Kingdom do exactly the same thing. I think limiting their choice in this matter is a retrograde step.

I also think we should be very savvy as to what we have called for in the past in this place and how we act. We talk about energy efficiency and energy saving, yet we still have trade difficulties with China – a massive tax on imports of energy-efficient light bulbs from that country. So we are being very two-faced in passing this report and not acting on those sorts of measures.

- Report: Carl Schlyter (A6-0495/2007)

Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I rise on this report because I absolutely despise the Common Fisheries Policy and the ecological disaster that it has caused for my country and the waters around it.

There are many good things in this report because it aims to cut down on the amount of fish that are disposed of, that are caught and not needed, or for which fishermen do not have the appropriate quota. But this does not sort out the root of the problem, in that this is a policy that deserves to be consigned to the rubbish bin.

It does not conserve fish, it does not help fishermen, and in fact many fishermen in my country think it would be best to get rid of it. There are plenty of examples around the world where fisheries policy aids conservation and keeps fishermen in jobs and doing what they want to do. Iceland has transferable quotas that become the property of the fishermen and their families and which can be transferred throughout generations.

We are not being wise enough or clever enough in this policy, and we should just get rid of it.

- Motion for a resolution: A European Strategy on the Roma (B6-0050/2008)

Zita Pleštinšká (PPE-DE). – (SK) Mr Chairman, the 12 million Roma people who are scattered all over Europe also have a place in our current multicultural society. Europe must respond to the often complex problems of the Roma community. That is why it is necessary to propose a complex approach to their solution.

Since I firmly believe that education and consequent career progression can break the vicious circle of discrimination against the Roma, I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution. The EQUAL programme,

which focuses on support for marginalised groups, has proved that it has a good practical use. It is important to appreciate the activities of associations, notably the work of the Kolping Society, which has set up consultation centres offering long-term unemployed people assistance with finding work.

There is the danger that these important activities could come to a halt in Slovakia because of delayed re-financing of implemented activities. I would call for the removal of all obstacles that lead to the insolvency of non-profit-making associations and local authorities, thus making the implementation of further projects impossible. I believe that the Commission will be more careful in monitoring national strategies and will harmonise, using the best methods, the joint progress of the Member States in cooperation with international and Roma organisations.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Mr President, I voted against the resolution, as this text has all the obnoxious characteristics typical of the texts adopted here with respect to discrimination. There has to be a framework strategy, there has to be a special task force to coordinate this framework strategy, presumably yet more staff need to be recruited for it, and so on.

It goes without saying that the Roma must be able to enjoy their fundamental rights as EU citizens, and that it is unacceptable if they cannot, but this resolution is another case of over-involvement. The Roma should also be encouraged to take responsibility themselves, an aspect that has been completely overlooked here.

The amendments tabled by Mrs Angelilli were justified. Problems such as forced marriages and the disadvantaged position of women and children have to be solved within the Roma communities themselves. It really is no help if we continue to say that all the problems these people face have to do with discrimination. They must also be encouraged to face up to their own responsibilities.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE). – (CS) *(The beginning of the speech was inaudible)* Each Member State faces issues concerning the Roma community that cannot be solved quickly. That is why I do not like the fact that the resolution, which is an articulate document but only general in nature, mentions only one concrete example: the Czech Republic, and more precisely the concentration camp in Lety.

I supported the general resolution in spite of this but I have one objection. The Commission is urged to end pig fattening on the site of the former Roma concentration camp, which is inappropriate – in my opinion, too – and to help erect a dignified memorial. I would also call on the Commission to provide sufficient funds to help the Czech Republic to cope with this situation.

Given that the European Parliament only mentions the Czech Republic as a concrete example, I believe that this should become a priority for the European Commission and its financial resources.

Milan Horáček (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, the proposal adopted today is a further, if still somewhat tentative, step towards a genuine strategy for integrating the Roma. Parliament has today called for the pig breeding activities in the former concentration camp in Lety to be relocated, as it did three years ago, in order to set up a memorial there.

This practical example once again shows how inadequate the current measures have been. Socio-political efforts there, as in many other European countries, leave a lot to be desired. A genuine integration of the Roma into our society would be actual proof of the fact that the cornerstones of democracy, the rule of law and human rights still form the basis of the European Community.

Written explanations of vote

- Interpretation of the Rules of Procedure (Rule 19(1))

Alyn Smith (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The way the Parliament conducts votes is sloppy, and this ruling will make it worse. This means that the rights of minorities have been curtailed. Minorities will find it harder within the Parliament to ensure that votes are credible. We must recognise that some Vice-Presidents are considerably better than others.

In any case, I am of the view that the 'electronic votes for everything' policy was working pretty well. It means MEPs need to be in their seats and paying attention (and, let's face it, many do not) and the lack of checks and challenges to the ruling of the Chair mean that sessions are actually going pretty smoothly, and all votes are recorded for posterity so our electors can see, on the record, how individual members vote.

- Report: Michael Cashman (A6-0511/2007)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the report by my British fellow Member Michael Cashman at first reading according to the codecision procedure, on the simplified regime for the control of persons at the external borders based on the unilateral recognition by Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia of certain documents as equivalent to their national visas for the purposes of transit through their territories. I approve the amendments by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs aimed at taking into account the new situation that exists in the Schengen area and the fact that, as of 21 December 2007, many of the countries at which the measure was directed are members of the Schengen area with no internal borders.

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) I was rapporteur for the Committee on Development on the 'Crossing external borders' report and therefore welcome with satisfaction the excellent work done by my colleague Mr Cashman. In 2008, the 1957 dream took another step forward: the European family formally enlarged its borders. Other frontiers fell and the 'Schengen area' became decidedly larger, with obvious positive implications. However, it is important that, beyond the physical and geographical sphere, we make more effort in the political and economic fields. In many areas, the 27 Member States still have different set-ups today; in some cases, they are very far apart: in too many areas there is not even basic synergy and the picture that emerges from this is completely fragmented. The European Union must implement procedures for a synthesis of Member State policies and strategies: we welcome freedom of movement of people and goods, but we stress even more strongly the need to create a political and regulatory framework that in the end is homogeneous.

Adam Bielan (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) The report being put to the vote today is crucial for simplifying the control of persons at the EU's external borders. Under the new regulations, visas issued by Poland and the new Member States confer the same rights as those issued by the rest of the Member States. This means that citizens of Ukraine, for example, will be able to move throughout the EU with a visa issued by Poland.

I would also like to point out that this report is a form of response to the enlargement of the Schengen area, which facilitates the transit of individuals from third countries within the EU. One positive aspect I recognise is the strengthening of action within the EU to combat the smuggling and trafficking of narcotics, trafficking in people, human organs and illegal arms and terrorism. In this respect I am categorically in favour of Michael Cashman's report.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) The aim of this initiative is for Cyprus and the two countries that joined the EU in 2007 – Romania and Bulgaria – to be able to introduce a simplified regime for the control of persons at the external borders, based on the unilateral equivalence of visas and residence permits.

This recognition is limited to transit through the territory of these three Member States for a period of up to five days.

I firmly support this simplified regime since third country nationals holding a visa issued by another Member State who would benefit from this system, have already been subject to a strict screening process in that Member State and were not considered a threat to public order or a risk in terms of illegal immigration.

These rules on the unilateral recognition of visas and residence permits were introduced for the first time into the Community *acquis* on visas in 2006, with the aim of simplifying the transit of certain categories of persons and, at the same time, avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens on consular offices.

For the nine countries that joined the EU in 2004 and became fully integrated into the Schengen area from 21 December 2007, mutual recognition of these documents became mandatory at the end of the transitional period.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) As in the case of the report on Switzerland and Liechtenstein, we believe it is important to stress that, in general, these agreements should be made in a broader framework that also aims to promote the rights of immigrant workers and to protect them against the appalling phenomenon of exploitation, by fostering the effective exercise of their rights and their integration, for example, guaranteeing the right to family reunification, applying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families – we would stress that it has yet to be ratified by any EU Member State – drafted under the auspices of the UN, an international legal instrument that aims to safeguard the defence of the human rights of migrant workers, particularly the unalienable right to family life.

In other words, facilitating the movement of citizens between the various countries should not be used as a means of facilitating the exploitation of cheap temporary labour that is easily 'discarded', of increasing exploitation and pressure on wages, of promoting precarious conditions, of deregulating labour relations, fuelling a retrograde step in terms of workers' rights and social conditions as a whole, but rather to combat such phenomena.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) It is an open secret that an enormous potential threat emanates from many eastern states; organised gang crime, prostitution, people trafficking and drug-related offences are all too often controlled by the East. And many of our new Member States are regarded as transit countries, from which people can converge on Western Europe.

Tighter controls at the EU's eastern external borders are therefore long overdue to ensure that the abolition of the Schengen borders does not degenerate into a 'free ticket for criminals'. For this reason I too have voted in favour of the Cashman report.

Frank Vanhecke (NI), *in writing*. – (NL) I voted against this report. I have already expressed my fundamental reservations about the Schengen system time and again in the past, and so cannot accept today the principle of mutual recognition contained in the report. Schengen naturally stands or falls by the watertight control of its external borders. Commission President Barroso can tell us a thousand times that Schengen enlargement will not lead to a decrease in security, but the reality is quite different. For example, German security experts in Chancellor Merkel's entourage note enormous weaknesses in the new eastern external borders and also in cooperation between the national police forces. The widespread fear is that illegal immigration will increase considerably. Once again, the enlightened souls of Euroland are engaging in wishful thinking and playing with the security of European citizens.

- Report: Panayiotis Demetriou (A6-0509/2007)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the report by my excellent Cypriot colleague Panayiotis Demetriou, at first reading under the codecision procedure, on amending the 2006 decision establishing a simplified regime for the control of persons at the external borders based on the unilateral recognition by the Member States of certain residence permits issued by Switzerland and Liechtenstein for the purpose of transit through their territory. I also approve the technical amendments proposed by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in order to align the text with the original provisions in particular as regards the territorial provisions.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) As we have pointed out, the measures and agreements that facilitate the movement of citizens from different countries should be based on principles of balance and mutual advantages for the various parties concerned.

We would recall the earlier agreements between the EC and Switzerland on the free movement of persons, which were of particular interest to Portugal, since more than 100 000 Portuguese work in that country, including many thousands of seasonal workers. These agreements should help to resolve many limitations and problems facing Portuguese workers in Switzerland, for example, with regard to changes of job or profession, family reunification, relocation to another canton, or the social protection of workers and their families.

In this sense, and in general, these agreements should be part of a broader framework that also aims to promote the rights of immigrant workers and protect them against the appalling phenomenon of exploitation.

Facilitating the movement of citizens between the various countries should not be used as a means of facilitating the exploitation of cheap temporary labour that is easily 'discarded', undermining labour relations, and in particular fuelling a retrograde step in terms of workers' rights and social conditions.

- Report: Philippe Morillon (A6-0001/2008)

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) This proposal by the European Commission aims to improve and simplify the relevant legislation which dates back 10 years. Over the past decade, aquaculture has been the fastest growing sector of the agri-food industry and European aquaculture currently provides more than 80 000 jobs.

The growing importance of the sector, in both economic and social terms, warrants an improvement in the information made available. Thus the aim is to improve data collection and transmission. It is also fundamental to harmonise data between Member States.

I have therefore decided to vote in favour of this proposal, as enhanced by the amendments introduced by the European Parliament.

- Report: Armando França (A6-0507/2007)

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The rise, especially in the past decade, of terrorist threats and attacks, along with their devastating consequences, has led to a pressing need to introduce the necessary measures and instruments to face up to this scourge.

This is a common threat requiring a global response – one that provides the means, resources and specialist knowledge to deal effectively with major crisis situations that a Member State would have difficulty tackling alone.

This initiative by the Austrian Presidency allows joint support teams to be set up that must be capable of providing a Member State with any necessary operational assistance following a terrorist attack.

I have no doubt that this type of major crisis situation requires a rapid response by special intervention units.

I therefore support this Decision that aims to establish the necessary legal framework, simplifying such cooperation and allowing Member States to respond more quickly in crisis situations or terrorist attacks, while ensuring that the affected Member State receives the highest possible level of help.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) This text, on the initiative of Austria, provides for the possibility of a Member State asking for the assistance of a special intervention unit of another Member State to control a crisis situation (hostage taking, hijacking, etc.). The help provided could consist either of the provision of equipment or specific expertise, or of the possibility of conducting an operation on the territory of the Member State requiring it.

We are in favour of this text, for various reasons. Firstly because this arrangement, aimed at fighting terrorism, is not binding because it does not force Member States either to ask for assistance or to grant it. Furthermore, the text states that all the practical arrangements (types of unit, equipment, etc.) will be laid down in bilateral agreements between the requesting Member State and the requested Member State.

In the context of the fight against terrorism, which by definition knows no borders, it is indeed very important to strive for the most effective cooperation between national police forces in the EU.

At a time when all justice and home affairs matters of Member States are soon going to fall within supranational competence under the Treaty of Lisbon, a kernel of intergovernmental resistance seems to remain: we are very glad about this.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) In the field of civil liberties, justice and home affairs, the EU has been treading a very dangerous path that is seriously jeopardising the rights, freedoms and safeguards of citizens and the very sovereignty of States and peoples.

The EU's growing federalist and militarist tendencies and measures have been responsible for the taking of decisions designed to establish structures, in terms of both information and police task forces, with powers to intervene on national territory, in a move that actually aims to overlap the national police.

The actual aim of this initiative by Austria, ably aggravated by the EP's proposals, is to set up or allow the formation, on the pretext of 'terrorism' and hypothetical 'crisis or risk situations', of real 'praetorian guards', duly indoctrinated, to take part in particular in the control, intimidation or repression of the exercise of rights and freedoms, in violation of the basic principles of democracy, the rule of law and the very constitutional legality and national sovereignty of Portugal.

We therefore warn against the dangers involved in the content and objectives of this initiative, and of any other measures relating to the exercise of any form of unlimited, irrational, disproportionate and unconstitutional power.

Anna Hedh (PSE), in writing. – (SV) I voted against the report because I am uneasy over what it will mean for the future. I am not opposed to pitching in and helping each other in crisis situations, but it must happen as and when required and in a natural way. I do not think it is justified to have joint exercises at EU taxpayers' expense, and I am absolutely opposed to foreign agents operating and exercising authority on Swedish territory with retained immunity. The logical consequence is a development towards a common police force, to which I am entirely opposed.

Carl Lang (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The text before us is attempting to give a legal framework to operations carried out by special intervention units of one Member State sent to the territory of another, in the event of a terrorist attack. Because these interventions can be so diverse (exchange of equipment, expertise, active units, etc.), it is left up to the Member States to conclude bilateral agreements to define the practical arrangements and to decide whether to accept or refuse the request for intervention on their territory of one of these operational units. Unbelievable. Finally, here is a real case of the application of that controversial and complicated principle of subsidiarity!

Finally, here is an area – that of national security, the sovereign area *par excellence* – that is resisting the supranational bulldozer of a Europe that legislates on everything, everywhere.

For effectiveness in the fight against terrorism, then, Europe is putting its money on cooperation between national police forces. We support this initiative.

But the key to victory over terrorism does not lie solely in cooperation. It requires an awareness of the revolutionary desire of Islamists, who advocate the destruction of humanist and Christian Western society and its values.

Inger Segelström (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) We voted for the report because it is based on voluntary action and cooperation such as can only be brought about by a reciprocal agreement between two Member States. However, we hold to the principle that foreign agents should not be allowed to operate or exercise authority on Swedish territory with retained immunity. We can see this leading to the possible development of a common police force, about which we have serious misgivings.

- Report: Umberto Guidoni (A6-0005/2008)

Jan Březina (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (CS) Allow me an explanatory remark concerning voting on the report on the European Research Area. The European Research Area, discussed here endlessly, is a very good idea and a very good vision. However, there is still a long way to go before it becomes a reality. Talking is not enough. We also have to assess how it functions and indeed whether it functions at all. Being a Member of this Parliament who represents a new country, I know from my own experience that at this stage the European Research Area is only an illusion and wishful thinking.

The first available data on the priority given to projects involving new Member States demonstrates this. Out of 559 subsidies approved under the grant for young scientists, only two went to the Czech Republic (none whatsoever went to Poland, which is several times bigger!), while over 100 went to the United Kingdom and 80 to Germany. It is difficult to believe that the difference in the quality of the projects was big enough to justify such numbers. Of course, the lack of experience of the people submitting projects in the new Member States is partly to blame. At any rate, this indicates that so far the European Research Area has not been functioning as it should. We therefore need less talk and more action to achieve tangible results. It must be said that in this regard we are still lagging behind.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) This report contains some contradictions and positions that we do not endorse. However, it is true that scientific research must go back to its main mission: the creation of new knowledge. The truth is that there is no linear relationship between R&D and innovation, though there are certain correlations, but they are complex and have to do with areas well outside the realm of science.

The perception of research as a sort of panacea to solve all economic and social problems therefore needs to be corrected, and more needs to be invested in research.

Some steps taken at the Lisbon European Council in 2000 were a reaction to the concerns about Europe's underinvestment in the knowledge economy, and this was further reinforced at the Barcelona European Council in 2002, where the EU set itself the objective of reaching an R&D intensity of 3 per cent by 2010. However, the growth in its R&D spending since 2000 has been insufficient, averaging only 1.84%, partly borne by industry.

Private sector investment in research is lower than the socially optimum level. States must play a central role and develop cooperation to make it possible to create new knowledge, making it available to society as a whole.

Genowefa Grabowska (PSE), *in writing*. – (PL) I fully support the report on the European Research Area, which outlines new prospects for research and development in the European Union. There is no doubt that

progress and social development, as well as Europe's place in the globalised world, depend on investment in science and research, and on the development of new knowledge that meets the needs of the 21st century.

Scientific research and new technologies do, after all, have a direct impact on social development, and they can even be crucial to economic growth, as they bring measurable benefits. A good and effective system of scientific research management at European level is therefore essential. Moreover, if we want Europe to rise to the new challenges, especially those of economic competition and environmental protection, we must appeal to Member States; we must in fact orient them towards a regular increase in expenditure on scientific research.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) The Commission has presented us with the Green Paper on the European Research Area at a time when Europe faces an unending transatlantic drain of investment and qualified researchers. If we want European research to become globally competitive, and this is one of the aims of the Lisbon Strategy, then the Union must overcome the fundamental obstacles it faces in this area.

In this respect I am thinking especially of the fragmentation of research in the EU and poorly developed European strategies in the area of scientific cooperation, the lack of human and material resources, and poorly developed research infrastructures, which have a hard time competing with global research centres. Added to this is the low mobility of scientists, expert knowledge and experience, caused primarily by legal, administrative and linguistic barriers.

In the course of developing the European Research Area and surmounting its fragmented nature we must pay considerable attention to our regions.

The regions should devise strategies for the development of human and material resources in the area of research and should promote access to research for everyone, especially female researchers and the young. The Member States should become more involved in the process of creating better working conditions for researchers and adopt measures that would allow them to reconcile their professional and family lives.

The regions are equally important in promoting and ensuring more efficient ways of funding research, in accordance with the commitments made in the Operational Programmes. The regions should also help to develop European centres of excellence that fall within their territorial spheres of activity, by establishing links between universities, research institutes and industry.

Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, no one doubts any more that science is the catalyst behind the development of our society. The present world trend points at the importance of science and demands that it be given adequate importance in society. Only investment in a knowledge-based society will make the Union competitive, creative and strategically attractive.

In the Green Paper 'The European Research Area: New Perspectives', the Commission offers an analysis and solutions and it also highlights the importance of creating a knowledge-based society. The European Parliament underlined, in the report by rapporteur Umberto Guidoni, that investment in education, science, research, culture and IT results in sustainable development for the future. Of course we have to realise that these steps will not bring immediate and tangible results. This is a marathon not a sprint, but I am sure that we will succeed in the end.

The European Research Area gives the research institutes, universities and scientists of the 27 EU countries the opportunity to cooperate. Cross-border administrative obstacles that hinder cooperation between scientific institutes nevertheless still exist. Opening up the European Union towards the East means significant enlargement of the European Research Area and offers approximately 1 50 000 researchers new opportunities to improve their scientific and technical potential.

I am convinced that new concepts and innovation in all areas will help us to create new job opportunities and find new ways of protecting the environment, improving food safety and health, and ensuring safer infinite sources of energy.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The idea that research, development and innovation are fundamental to competitiveness is not new and is still current. Aside from differences of opinion over the need to direct efforts towards innovation or towards more academic research, it is clear that Europe needs to improve its investment in knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge. But this need is not merely a matter of financial investment.

Various successive reports relate the many reasons why Europe lags behind other parts of the world. From American universities to Indian research, we are surrounded by fierce and growing competition. On the other hand, European tertiary institutions are less attractive, as these reports also demonstrate, consistently referring, among other things, to poor funding overall and per capita, and our universities' lack of autonomy as factors inhibiting better performance.

For all these reasons, any approach that frames this as an urgent economic and strategic issue merits our approval. And while it is true that time is against us, it is also true that it is better to spend time selecting the right options than to take hurried and ineffective decisions.

Teresa Riera Madurell (PSE), in writing. – (ES) In view of the cancellation of the debate on Mr Guidoni's report on the European Research Area, as the rapporteur for the Socialist Group I would like to explain the reasons why we voted in favour of it.

First of all I should mention the good work done by Mr Guidoni, which includes many of our proposals. A European research area should certainly include:

- a single labour market for researchers, which means establishing a single European career path in the field of research and an integrated information system for jobs and training contracts;
- making the recruitment and promotion procedures more open, with a better balance between men and women on boards;
- removing barriers to mobility and promoting greater participation of women in R&D, with measures to reconcile professional and private life;
- strengthening research institutions and the participation of SMEs in R&D;
- greater coordination with national and regional programmes, and more synergies with other European programmes;
- building infrastructures exploited by joint European ventures; and
- encouraging international cooperation, promoting multilateral initiatives, exchanges to use infrastructures and scientific cooperation programmes for development.

These are necessary and coherent ways to move forward, which is why we voted in favour.

Margie Sudre (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) Science knows no boundaries, and the questions at the root of research are increasingly global in nature. The European Research Area (ERA) must ensure scientific and technological cooperation contributes effectively to the stability, safety and prosperity of humanity.

So I hope that the ERA, from the point of view of its openness to the world, will favour the EU's outermost regions (ORs), in order to make the most of the advantages and riches offered by Europe's regional diversity, by incorporating them coherently into research programmes in the context of 'networks of excellence'.

I would also urge the ERA to recognise the importance of the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT), which are valuable partners in establishing bridges between nations and continents within the perspective of sustainable global development, in order to meet the challenges facing the planet.

I sincerely thank the rapporteur and the members of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy for supporting my amendment on this matter contained in the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development. This is additional proof of the spirit of coordination and complementarity that reigns in our Parliament.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) We oppose the reactionary restructuring of the field of research that is being promoted in the EU's basic guidelines for the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy.

The ERA is encouraging conflict and competition for profit between countries and large business groups. As a result, inequalities in scientific development will be intensified.

Incentives, subsidies and tax exemptions are increased for monopoly companies, allowing them to invest in and make use of the results for themselves. The public sector is subordinated to the needs of the monopoly groups it serves. The mobility of researchers between companies, universities and research centres is being

promoted and the European patent system is being supported on the grounds of cost. Everything is being subordinated to competitiveness and the rise in profitability.

In such a harshly competitive environment, which is present even in the world of research, attention will inevitably focus on the well-known 'centres of excellence' of the powerful nations. These centres will secure the lion's share of the research programmes, which will be channels for public and private funds.

We are striving to overturn the EU's research policy. This is part of our struggle for the complete reversal of the anti-popular policy upheld by the EU and by capitalism. We hope to restore the social nature of science: research and science should serve today's popular needs and social welfare.

- Report: Markus Ferber (A6-0505/2007)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the adoption at second reading of the Council common position amending the Postal Directive of 1997 and aimed at full accomplishment of the internal market of postal services, and I congratulate my excellent German colleague Markus Ferber for the immense job he has done.

I am delighted that the Council has accepted all the major elements of the European Parliament's position, particularly the postponement of the deadline for market opening to 31 December 2010 with a two-year extension for Member States that joined the EU from 2004; the universal service with at least one delivery and collection five days a week for every EU citizen, with the maintenance of a sufficient number of access points in rural, remote or sparsely populated regions; and respect for subsidiarity in social considerations, on the subject of which I hope the social partners work at European level. I am disappointed that the foundations for a European regulator for this sector have not been laid. Finally, I hope that operators will quickly agree on the introduction of a European stamp for 50 gram letters and I will soon be taking a political initiative on this matter.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Despite the improvements made to the Commission's original text and the compromise put forward by the European Parliament aimed notably at postponing the total liberalisation of the postal market to 31 December 2010, the text retabled at second reading by the Council is still not satisfactory.

It is not satisfactory because it only summarily and minimally settles the issues and problems raised concerning in particular the financing of the universal service, the obligation to deliver mail five days a week and indeed equal treatment of areas and the existence of a single price for a stamp. It is not satisfactory because legal uncertainty results from all these points.

In reality, this text, the only consensual virtues of which were hard won, merely delays the inevitable uncontrolled consequences of opening the postal sector to competition.

The European Union's plans will inevitably lead to an upturn in post office closures, large-scale job losses and downward pressure on pay and conditions in the postal sector in Europe.

Hélène Goudin (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) I take the view that the Member States should decide for themselves whether they want to deregulate their national postal monopolies. I have therefore voted in favour of Amendment 10, which rejects the common position of the Council.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We regret the non-adoption of our proposal to reject this Directive aimed at full liberalisation of postal services, thereby creating a 'market' at EU level.

In this way the majority in the EP – representing the same political forces that are at the centre of right-wing politics in each country – is seeking to take one more step along the path of dismantling this essential public service.

This is an attack by the big multinationals on the public postal service, the public ownership of this service and the public administration that has to provide it, as well as on its democratic nature, attempting to wrest from the power of each people, i.e. from their national sovereignty, the control and power of decision on these crucial issues, which go on to be decided at supranational level by the EU institutions, following interests alien to the people and to Portugal.

Also significant is the rejection of our amendment which aimed to safeguard the requirement for all 'operators' to comply fully with labour legislation, namely any legal or contractual provision concerning employment

conditions, including health and safety at work, which Member States apply in accordance with national law, as well as social security legislation and collective agreements concluded.

Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) With reference to my speech of yesterday on the subject of liberalisation of the postal services, I would like to add a comment which I was previously unable to include owing to the restricted time available to me, and which concerns sources of finance for the universal service. I fear that methods of funding it through a specially created fund or state subsidies may block liberalisation of the sector and may constitute an instrument that Member States can use to slow down and evade implementation of the provisions of the directive. I therefore believe that the European Commission has a major role to play here, its task being to monitor the proper introduction of the directive's provisions.

Ian Hughton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I supported amendments which would have obliged Member States to guarantee the financing of universal postal services. This is a hugely important issue, especially in the many rural and island communities of Scotland.

I also supported amendments tabled by my Group calling for the strengthening of obligations to finance the provision of free postal services to blind and partially-sighted persons.

The fact that the Ferber report was approved unamended in these respects may lead to concern that further erosion of postal service provision could occur.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) I support the Swedish deregulation of the postal market, but I oppose the notion that the EU institutions should decide whether the various postal monopolies are to be abolished or not.

I consider that the Member States should be left to decide for themselves whether they want to deregulate their national postal monopolies. I have therefore voted in favour of Amendment 10, which rejects the common position of the Council.

Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) Along with all the members of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, I have voted against the common position of the European Parliament and the Council, because it strengthens the dogmatic neo-liberal approach to a key area of public interest: the postal services. The directive offers no long-term solution, and the postponement of its entry into force simply postpones its negative effects by two years.

With the effective abolition of the principle of 'universal service', public access to high-quality, inexpensive postal services will be limited. The consequences will be all the more serious for residents of remote and inaccessible mountain or island regions, which companies will not be able to serve profitably.

In countries where the market has already been fully liberalised, experience to date is anything but positive. The demand for forced liberalisation of the postal services creates more problems than it solves.

Pierre Pribetich (PSE), in writing. – (FR) I was keen to oppose the liberalisation of the postal services market based on three fundamental positions:

- the need to have free postal services for the blind and partially-sighted, an essential value of a non-discriminatory society.
- a guarantee from Member States of finance for the universal service before the opening of the markets, an essential condition for the protection of consumers.
- compliance with employment legislation, particularly social security, by all operators.

Because the relevant amendments were not adopted, I can only lament this drift towards uncontrolled liberalisation that fails to respect the fundamental right of European citizens to a public postal service.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) We welcome the final approval of the report on the market in postal services, noting that the lengthy institutional procedure demonstrates the importance of this dossier for achieving its two main objectives, namely ensuring the maintenance of the universal service and appropriate opening of the market to fair competition.

In particular I would like to stress that the opening of the markets will mean a better service and better choice for citizens, thereby avoiding distortion of competition and bringing a definitive end to existing monopolies.

Another issue is the financing of the universal service. Where it entails a net cost for a Member State, it may be covered by a financing plan to be submitted to the Commission. Yet it is worth recalling the Portuguese case, and others, which demonstrate that universal public service can be provided perfectly well with resources from the reserved area, a transparent and neutral method that does not involve state subsidies.

I would repeat that there is no reason to prevent such a service from continuing, as it is fundamental to territorial and social cohesion and for supporting populations living in deserted areas or more remote and inaccessible territories.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The Council's common position on postal services, which is submitted by the European Parliament for approval, will result in the complete liberalisation of the 'market in postal services' with effect from 31 December 2010.

With the amendment of the directive, yet another lucrative sector – the postal services – is being handed over. This is happening within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy to maximise the profitability of the postal services.

The postal services are being transformed from a public good into a commodity. In Greece the privatisation of sections of ELTA (Hellenic Post), promoted by the ND (Nea Dimokratia/New Democracy) and PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) governments, will continue at an increased rate. From now on, ELTA will be operating on the basis of economic private-sector criteria, in the interests of profit instead of the good of society. This will immediately impact on the quality of service. The consequences will be dire, not only for ELTA employees, but also within the private postal services companies. Here flexible forms of employment are already the norm, as are an absence of labour rights and social and insurance rights.

The constitutionally safeguarded principle of secrecy of correspondence is also being jeopardised: correspondence is now being entrusted to private contractors, with no guarantees and with minimal scope for checking that its secrecy is being maintained or that personal data is being protected.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) is opposed to the liberalisation of the postal services and is fighting for services that are exclusively public, modern and effective, and for the protection of workers' rights.

Lars Wohlin (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) The European Parliament has today voted for the compromise with the Council under which Europe's postal market is to be liberalised by the end of December 2010 at the latest (except for those countries with a particularly difficult topography, which are to be given a further two years). As the work has progressed, I have argued especially for the application of reciprocity, i.e. there should be a reciprocal agreement to prevent those countries which are holding back their liberalisation from competing in those countries which are commencing theirs.

I therefore note with great satisfaction that, first the rapporteur (Mr Ferber), then the Council accepted my amendment and that henceforth it forms part of the compromise which is now being approved.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – The proposal seeks to create a European single market in postal services. Without appropriate safeguards, liberalisation could jeopardise the concept of a universal service. The reluctance of the Council to include a clear commitment to providing a free postal service for the blind and visually impaired in the proposal led me to vote in favour of making such a commitment more robust.

In general, I am satisfied that the proposal sufficiently attends to the other issues and welcome the guarantee that letters will be regularly collected and delivered in remote areas and cities.

- Motion for a resolution: Situation in Iran (B6-0046/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), in writing. – (IT) The 'nuclear' issue in Iran should be marked by a diplomatic approach aimed at 'normalising' relations. We need to maintain a political line based on diplomacy that allows us to abandon the escalation of attitudes and threats of military action, to make way for dialogue through the recognition of Iran's right to develop nuclear technology for civil use. Nonetheless, it is right that we should commit ourselves to reaching a negotiation situation that persuades Iran to give up the option of military use, in a multilateral perspective of nuclear disarmament, to guarantee a state of calm and international peace.

On the other hand, I cannot fail to express a certain amount of concern about the current human rights situation in Iran, where we are witnessing a fresh upsurge in repression of freedom of opinion and of the rights of minorities and women, where order is kept through a harsh and inhuman judicial and prison system

that all too often uses capital punishment, torture and stoning. The efforts made so far have not produced any tangible results. To claim a place at the table of the great international powers, Iran must now present itself not as a military superpower, but as a country capable of protecting the human rights of its citizens.

Glyn Ford (PSE), *in writing*. – Only a few months ago US intelligence acknowledged that its claim that Iran was developing nuclear weapons was in error. In fact, Iran's nuclear weapons programme was abandoned in 2001/2002.

Yet Washington has failed to draw the appropriate political conclusion from this intellectual U-turn. The argument for deploying National Missile Defence technologies in Eastern Europe was to supposedly defend against a nuclear Iran which had mysteriously acquired ICBMs.

Now if Iran's nuclear programme does not exist, the justification for NMD deployment vanishes, unless the hidden agenda is to threaten a resurgent Russia. I am resolutely opposed to such a deployment and will campaign against it.

Patrick Gaubert (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) The resolution voted on today concerning Iran has definite political importance. Iran is central to international concerns and we needed to come back to it.

This text deals both with the nuclear issue and with the human rights situation. On both points, we are clear. We cannot accept the development of a military nuclear programme in Iran. The resolution expresses its agreement with and support for the EU's efforts to arrive at a negotiated long-term settlement for the Iranian nuclear issue and underlines the essential role to be played by the IAEA. It also reaffirms that a solution to the current escalation of the nuclear issue is possible and that military action should not be envisaged.

On the other hand, the serious and repeated human rights violations must be firmly denounced. The situation is worrying, in four areas: the death penalty, women's rights, freedom of expression and the repression of religious minorities. It seems absolutely essential to me not to appear complacent on this subject and the resolution strongly urges the Iranian government to change course in this matter.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The UN Security Council is again going to adopt a resolution imposing sanctions on Iran for its nuclear activities. Will it be a matter of backing a military operation against the country? Or simply a matter of using a harsher tone and coming up with diplomatic or economic sanctions?

For months this cleverly staged psychodrama has been holding Parliament and other international bodies in suspense. But is Iran's nuclear capability really the main threat that the world in general, and the West and its allies in particular, have to confront? It is completely paradoxical that we are not reacting to Pakistan's nuclear weapons, which do actually exist, in a particularly unstable geopolitical context, or those of North Korea, in the hands of a particularly dangerous regime. I have already had occasion to say this: the rules of law we claim to uphold should be the same for everyone. Otherwise they lose all meaning and legitimacy.

Meanwhile, I am much more worried about Islamist threats on our own continent, which, far from being hypothetical, have already demonstrated their murderous capacity in London and Madrid, without the involvement of Iran. It is true that this threat is one of the consequences of the mass immigration policy you are carrying out, and which you want to make even worse.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The hypocrisy of the 'international community' – i.e. the United States and its allies – regarding the NPT and, especially, Iran's nuclear programme must be denounced.

There is no such political initiative on the nuclear weapons programmes of some EU members or the United States – or even the nuclear programmes of Israel, Pakistan or India, countries that have not signed the NPT but do have nuclear weapons – the United States already having stated that it could use them offensively.

Therefore, what is needed is full compliance with the NPT and the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The real issue regarding Iran is that the United States and the EU both know that peak oil production has already ended in many countries.

The reason for the serious threats of military aggression, provocations and so much haste regarding Iran's nuclear programme, is that the country has the world's best reserves of hydrocarbons, and the United States and the EU are trying to create the conditions, even by manipulating public opinion, to control its energy resources and the whole Middle East, as we are seeing in Iraq.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – I support the recommendations made in the resolution. However, as regards the PMOI, I voted against the amendments referring to the group in the text.

Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The opinions of Javier Solana and of EU representatives and supporting parties have put paid to any illusions about the EU's position with regard to Iran and the Middle East generally.

These opinions prove that the EU is in favour of promoting the US-NATO plan for 'democratising the Middle East', which aims to subject nations and peoples to control of their wealth-producing resources. The assurances on behalf of the IAEA and the CIA's report on Iran's non-military use of nuclear energy are deliberately being ignored by the EU, which is stepping up the pressure with sanctions against Iran, and is intensifying propaganda to accustom public opinion to the idea of a war against Iran. Furthermore, Javier Solana has clearly linked the situation in Lebanon and the wider area with the issue of nuclear weapons - without, however, making any reference to Israel's nuclear weapons.

In the wider area of the Middle East, we are witnessing the emergence of imperialist aggression and clashes over the sharing out of markets. The victims of this are, among others, the peoples of Palestine, Iran and Lebanon. The only answer to these new aggressive, warlike plans is for citizens to resist imperialism and harbour no illusions about the role of the EU.

Those who are in a position to decide on issues of human rights and their violation are the citizens of each country; they should not allow themselves to become an excuse for another Iraq.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) Iran is currently a regional and global threat and a challenge to the EU Member States' ability to stand firm together on the international scene. Aside from the successive and contradictory reports that are appearing, the truth is that Iran has not complied with its transparency obligation, nor has it helped to create a climate of confidence. Quite the contrary. Moreover, aside from the nuclear dossier, the news is not encouraging either. Violations of human rights, state violence and sham electoral democracy are all factors to be taken into account in our attitude towards Iran.

Therefore, in the light of the above, but also on account of what I have stood for in the past, I agree with the essence of the adopted resolution, and emphasise the European Parliament's insistence that the Council and the Commission comply with the European Court of Justice's ruling by removing the Iranian resistance, the PMOI, from the list of terrorist organisations. The EU (and some Member States) have been treating the Iranian resistance in a way that benefits the Iranian regime and neither the Iranian people nor the democratisation objectives for that part of the world. That strategy has to change – and it is beginning to change.

- Motion for a resolution: Outcome of the Bali Conference on Climate Change (B6-0059/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) I am pleased at the way the Bali conference went, and that it produced un hoped-for results, partly thanks to the role played by the EU during the negotiations. In this tricky situation it was fundamentally important to give a signal of unity, cooperation and responsibility in a way that would get the negotiations to set new emission reduction targets for the post-Kyoto period (2012) off to a good start.

By accepting the conclusions of scientists on the IPCC, all the participants recognised at the political level that climate change exists, that its origins are anthropogenic and that we need to act by 2020 to avoid irreparable damage to the Earth's climate.

I hope that Copenhagen in 2009 signals the turning point in the fight against climate change with the acceptance of stringent targets for reduction by 2020 by all industrialised and developing countries. Certainly, this new challenge will involve costs and inefficiencies that are difficult to justify unless, as I have already said in previous interventions, we make necessary and courageous choices such as the return to nuclear power. Inaction, procrastination and exhausting conferences will lead only to irreversible damage to the environment.

Edite Estrela (PSE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the outcome of the Bali Conference on Climate Change (COP 13 and COP/MOP 3) because, in view of the urgency of reducing global warming, I believe that the agreement reached in Bali was an important step forward so that in 2009, in Copenhagen, a new protocol can be drawn up and approved, with new targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I feel that the Portuguese EU Presidency played a key role in the Bali Conference, making an active contribution to the progress of the negotiations and managing to reach a very positive agreement. It would be desirable, however, for the Bali Action Plan to refer to quantified targets for the reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Overall, this resolution merely repeats general ideas, and is inadequate in various areas. Hence our abstention.

For instance, since the main objective is to reduce CO₂ emissions produced by burning fossil fuels, the issue of measuring those emissions arises. We know that this measurement is very complex and can be manipulated, since fossil fuels, after extraction, are transported and processed, and their by-products distributed and used in many ways, at thousands of end points.

As various specialists in the field have indicated, to reduce emissions and achieve targets, it is more effective and simpler to monitor an instrument approved under a protocol on the extraction and international marketing of fossil fuels. Thus, it would be easier to set rates or targets for reducing primary fossil fuel production, and corresponding exports/imports, thus setting maximum emissions limits by country.

But there is also a need to negotiate commitments by the richer countries to release funds to support developing countries, to help them bear the economic and social costs of the necessary measures.

I regret that the Group's proposals to that end were rejected.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Last December, the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change met in Bali, having made progress on many aspects relating to global climate protection.

In addition to the start of negotiations on a new protocol to replace the Kyoto Protocol, I would highlight the statement that the fourth IPCC Report was a better scientific basis for the Convention's work, and the reference, for the first time – thus ending the taboo – to developing countries also having to cooperate, obviously taking account of their economic context and their development.

Finally, I believe that the major innovation at Bali was the inclusion, for the first time, of the issue of deforestation which, as part of the Bali Action Plan, will be discussed with a view to its inclusion in the future Protocol.

I am voting in favour of the resolution of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change since it supports the outcome achieved in Bali, makes a number of observations on the role of the EU in future negotiations, with which I agree, and specifies where the Bali Action Plan could have gone further.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report.

The Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Bali from 3 to 15 December, was supposed to set out a schedule for the next two years and reach an agreement extending the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. Although the first objective appears to have been met, we are still a long way from achieving the second.

It is most regrettable that the international community was not able to agree on a target figure for the stabilisation then reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions of at least 20% from their 1990 level by 2020. The European Union should strengthen the constructive and proactive role it was able to play in Bali so as not to provide the countries that reject all targets with an excuse to refuse to act.

Although the Bali agreement, which was signed by all the countries present, should be welcomed, we should not give way to a new set of environmental platitudes. There are still two years in which to reach an agreement, and hesitations over the roadmap indicate that the toughest part is still to come.

Diamanto Manolakou (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The Bali Conference resolution on climate change is seeking to find positive signs where there are none. At the same time, it conceals the cause of environmental destruction: the plundering of natural resources by capital in order to profit from the commercialisation of the land, air, energy and water.

The resolution points ahead to the danger that climate change 'could be a major factor in destabilisation of the poorest countries'. This Euro-monopoly capital can use climate change as a pretext for further exploiting the developing countries, as we know that the activity of the multinationals is one of the major reasons for poverty.

The resolution calls for serious commitment from the emerging nations, in accordance with their development stage and the composition of their economies. It refers more specifically to China and India on the issue of promoting cooperation on energy policy to limit pollutants. Essentially it aims to put pressure on them by curbing their developing potential and their claims to larger market shares in the face of imperialist competition for the allocation of markets. Perhaps this is why there is no reference to measures for the direct reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and why there are only general expressions of good intent.

In a nutshell, climate change at the Bali conference was mere window-dressing. The real issues were the intensifying of intra-imperialist conflicts in the energy sector and the commercialisation of the environment.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I fully support the resolution's assessment of the outcome of the Bali Summit negotiations. Thanks to the EU, Bali achieved more than might have been expected, but less than was needed. The lack of agreement among all negotiating parties on concrete objectives and figures for the reduction of CO₂ emissions is regrettable. I voted in favour of the resolution.

Karin Scheele (PSE), in writing. – (DE) It is important that the link between deforestation and climate change is explicitly highlighted in the resolution adopted. The role of the rainforests is crucial to the world's climate. They store huge amounts of CO₂. In addition, they are the earth's largest reservoirs. They soak up water like a sponge and thereby cool the atmosphere. Deforestation and slashing and burning, however, jeopardise this extremely important role enormously. Stopping deforestation and slashing and burning would therefore be an extremely radical contribution to combating global warming.

Increased demand for biofuels in Europe is diametrically opposed to the protection of the rainforests. Thousands of hectares of rainforest have already been cleared to extract palm oil in order to meet the increased demand for bio-diesel. Certification and identification of the sustainable production of biofuels is therefore an essential requirement for the protection of the rainforests and the world's climate. In addition, production is also aggravating the social situation in the countries concerned owing to the massive increase in the price of staple foods. I am therefore against the Commission's proposal as part of the climate and energy package to fix a binding target of 10% for biofuels by 2020, because this contributes nothing to climate protection and is a far cry from a sustainable policy.

Lars Wohlin (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) There must be a drastic reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases in the years ahead. The resolution contains many good ideas as to how this goal is to be attained, so I have chosen to vote for the resolution.

The targets being set can be summed up in the expression 20-20-20, which means that emissions must come down by 20%, that the use of renewable energy sources must increase by 20% and that these aims must be achieved by the year 2020. However, I think that the emphasis should be on reducing emissions and that it must then be left to each Member State to decide how this aim is to be achieved. Hence the EU should refrain from specifying how countries are to change the ways they use renewable energy sources.

In so far as it may be appropriate to issue any such specification, it is regrettable that nuclear energy is not included under the heading of renewable energy sources. The IAEA has concluded that nuclear energy is a necessary element in the drive to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. It is regrettable that this resolution chooses to disregard that fact by insisting that emissions must not be reduced through the use of nuclear energy.

In the implementation of this resolution it will become clear that the EU has indirectly ruled out a role for nuclear energy in improving the climate situation. Such an attitude is distinctly odd in my opinion, and it should be clearly noted.

- Report: Fiona Hall (A6-0003/2008)

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) We have voted for the resolution on the grounds of its general focus, but we do not support all the points of technical detail or the ambitions to regulate by political decisions what products may be manufactured or sold – such things as patio heaters, for example.

Giles Chichester (PPE-DE), in writing. – British Conservatives support the broad thrust of this own-initiative report – who could be against energy efficiency? However, we have reservations about certain aspects of the proposal where the rapporteur seems to have lost a sense of proportion.

Energy efficiency marking is good for enabling consumers to make a choice but to start proscribing particular products merely because they use energy in a way that some do not approve seems excessive.

It seems particularly unreasonable to pick on patio heaters (paragraph 16), which have become widespread as a direct consequence of the UK Government's anti-smoking legislation.

We trust that this particular suggestion will not be incorporated into any future Commission proposal.

Nigel Farage (IND/DEM), in writing. – I fully disapprove of discards – and this is the policy of my party – but I am unable to vote for the imposition of EU decisions, however enlightened they may sometimes appear.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) This is yet another report that takes stock of a situation without going into its causes or pointing out essential routes to follow, but merely takes up controversial statements by international organisations and, in one or two cases, such as the reference to Russia and Africa, shows that its concern is much more the defence of the EU's interests than any cooperation policy, which we disagree with.

What is clear is that the scarcity of fossil fuels, as reflected in their prices, requires a reduction in consumption. In order to avoid reducing economic and social activities, we therefore need to deliberately reduce unnecessary consumption, waste in conversion processes, transport and distribution, and final consumption.

Since energy cannot be recycled after use and since the sources are scarce, it must be managed in accordance with technical knowledge and complex political priorities, requiring central planning by governments in the public interest, eliminating the fluctuations and nervousness of the market agents. We have yet to achieve this.

Other well intentioned recommendations already relate to living and working in cities and metropolitan areas, with potentially very positive consequences for renewal and innovation in energy networks, buildings, transport and other public utilities.

Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing. – I support the general principle of this report as an Action Plan for Energy Efficiency. I have no problem with investigating ways of making 'space heaters' more efficient, but I am not in favour of banning 'patio heaters'.

As far as I can see, the majority of these are used by publicans to warm smokers that recent legislation has driven out into the cold. Already the smoking ban has closed hundreds of public houses with the consequent loss of jobs. Such a ban would only multiply closures and job losses.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) Even beyond the refrain that has become commonplace here on climate change and measures to combat it, the issue of the energy security and independence of European states in itself justifies us trying to make better use of energy. The reason we will not vote against this report is that it is at European level that most standards are developed.

However, in this report, we fall back into the Malthusian and guilt-apportioning vision present in all Parliament's reports on the subject: blind stigmatisation of motorists, bans on certain equipment, the desire to dictate individuals' behaviour and to press-gang children from their earliest years, to meddle in planning and construction policy, to promote energy taxation and pricing schemes that in fact will harm only the most fragile sectors of the population.

Therefore – yes to minimum standards, yes to encouraging research, yes to objective information that allows enlightened choices, yes to the promotion of tax incentives. No to persecution and bludgeoning.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) Research results indicate that emissions of greenhouse gases caused by man are contributing to rapid climate change. We therefore support the main conclusion that all countries must take comprehensive measures to reduce these emissions and that the EU countries must take the lead.

At the same time we object to the tendency of both the Commission and Parliament's rapporteurs always to exploit great challenges in order to centralise political power and create an EU without freedom and dynamism.

The EU's role in energy policy should be limited to:

- setting emission targets for each country and then leaving it to those countries and the market to attain the targets in free competition
- internalising emission costs by pricing emission rights at sufficiently high levels. (Emissions will then be automatically taken into account in the billions of economic decisions taken every day around the world by households and businesses. Then households will of their own accord choose energy-saving light bulbs, car manufacturers will produce vehicles with low fuel consumption and property developers will build passive houses. It will then pay to carry out R&D in the field.)
- allocating money for research and legislating on product labelling.

EU politicians must not regulate in detail. No one knows at present how best to plan this gigantic transformation. We therefore oppose such things as bans on patio heaters and tax concessions for building demolitions.

We have voted 'no' in order thereby to encourage a rethink of the EU's energy policy.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this report, which falls in with the conclusions of the European Council in March 2007 on energy efficiency, which underlined the need to improve energy efficiency in the EU to achieve the objective of saving 20% of the EU's energy consumption compared to forecasts for 2020.

I welcome the measures aimed at improving the energy performance of products, buildings and services, improving the efficiency of energy production and distribution, reducing the impact of transport on energy consumption, facilitating finance and investment in the field, to encourage and reinforce sensible behaviour with respect to energy consumption.

European citizens must be able to benefit from infrastructure (including buildings), products (appliances and cars, among other things), processes and energy services offering the best energy efficiency in the world.

The action plan will also have the effect of strengthening industrial competitiveness and developing exports of new technologies, and will have positive effects on employment. Furthermore, the savings made will also compensate for investment in innovative technologies.

Marian Harkin (ALDE), in writing. – I do not support the paragraph calling for the withdrawal from the market of specific household appliances as this is too strong a statement.

Sarah Ludford (ALDE), in writing. – I have voted in support of the report, which is on the whole excellent. However paragraph 16 which 'Urges the Commission to establish timetables for the withdrawal from the market of all the least energy-efficient items of equipment, appliances and other energy-using products, such as patio heaters', would have been better without singling out one particular piece of equipment for a 'ban', since it is only one among many that raise concerns over energy wastage and it is one that many people enjoy using, not least in an urban social context like my own London constituency.

I welcome moves by some retailers to stop selling such heaters in response to consumer pressure, and I would not buy one myself. But I believe that the best course is to set minimum standards for energy efficiency of appliances, inform people of energy consumption and encourage them to consider their overall carbon footprint and choose their appliances, use of transport, social behaviour etc. accordingly, rather than to ban patio heaters or any other particular item as such. After all – and hopefully – innovation in response to efficiency standards may deliver more efficient patio heaters.

Jules Maaten (ALDE), in writing. – (NL) I welcome this proposal by Mrs Hall, and the fact that the transition is being made at long last from abstract theories to concrete proposals in order to increase energy efficiency in the European Union. I am pleased that this report retains the target of a 20% improvement in energy efficiency by 2020. I do not endorse section 16 of the report, which calls for the withdrawal from the market of the least energy-efficient appliances. After all, industry needs to be encouraged to produce better, more efficient appliances. I therefore abstained from the final vote.

Toine Manders (ALDE), in writing. – (NL) The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) opposes bans, but supports improvements. Thus the VVD opposes a ban on patio heaters, but supports innovative solutions to combat inefficiency. The VVD Group in the European Parliament takes the view that, in the context of the fight against climate change, it would be strange if we did not also look at how to make patio heaters more efficient. Therefore, the group has endorsed the Hall report's appeal to the European Commission

for the phasing out of energy-inefficient appliances and their replacement with more efficient models. The report must be regarded as an incentive for industry to develop more energy-efficient appliances – patio heaters, for example.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – The action plan delivers the most cost-effective tools to fight against climate change. Indeed, I welcome the plan and feel that the target of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 is feasible both technically and economically.

The plan is a step in the right direction and I voted in favour of it, though this should be seen as a first step and more ambitious targets should follow.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Energy-saving measures and greater energy efficiency are desirable for environmental and economic considerations. I therefore voted in favour of the Hall report, but hope that we are more successful here than with the reduction in energy consumption that we are aiming for by 2020, or with the agreed increase in the proportion of renewable forms of energy – both noble intentions, which we shall probably not be able to sustain as things currently stand.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) Fiona Hall's report concerns an extremely important subject. It is not enough for the EU to lay down tough rules for carbon dioxide emissions. People must be able and willing to change their own consumption and behaviour patterns in order to make a real difference. Paragraph 61 dispenses sound sense on this point: the fight must begin at home.

For the sake of our credibility the European Parliament should therefore set a good example in its own activity. We exhort the people of the EU to dispense with everything from kettles to heated bar and restaurant terraces, while at the same time the energy consumption of the European Parliament's second seat alone generates 5 322 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year! A study commissioned by MEP Caroline Lucas shows that Parliament's monthly relocations to France have dramatic environmental consequences. Altogether the trips to Strasbourg, where Parliament holds its votes, result in 18 901 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year. That corresponds to over 10 000 flights from Europe to New York.

It was good that the report was passed. To cease travelling to Strasbourg for our votes, which could just as easily be taken care of at home, would be better.

- Report: Carl Schlyter (A6-0495/2007)

Derek Roland Clark (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – I support a ban on discards which is in line with my party's policy on sensible rules for commercial fishing. I am unable to vote for the resolution because it represents more EU interference in UK affairs. The UK is more than able to make its own arrangements for fishing and fishery protection, as we always used to do before joining this wasteful organisation.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) Discards (throwing dead or dying fish overboard) and by-catches are a serious problem to be solved in the context of the CFP.

With management mechanisms that take account of landings rather than catches, the EU fisheries industry needs a rapid reformulation of its policies in order to reduce these bad practices.

In this connection the European Commission produced a Communication announcing its intention to introduce a policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and gradually eliminate discards in European fisheries.

Unwanted by-catches and their subsequent discarding has innumerable negative consequences: it is a waste of resources, the catching of juveniles of target species results in lower catch opportunities for those species and a reduction in the spawning biomass and, together with catches and discards of species which are not targeted by fisheries (fish, crustacean, sea mammal or sea bird species, etc.) amounts to a biological attack on the marine ecosystem.

In the light of the above and because this report works towards sustainable fishing, in accordance with the principles of the reformed CFP, I intend to vote in favour.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) It is of course desirable and necessary to reduce unwanted by-catches and discards, but it should not be done by legislation.

As it is impossible to mention all the aspects raised in the report, we welcome the adoption of our amendment that 'points out that the impact of small-scale fishing on discards is minimal, and therefore calls for greater Community support for the promotion and development of small-scale inshore and artisanal fishing'.

We regret the rejection of our proposals that emphasised:

- that in order to lay down suitable measures to promote a real reduction in discards it is first necessary to establish and analyse the various causes that give rise to discards, such as commercial reasons (linked to price, marketing, maximising the value of fish), catches of fish below the minimum landing sizes or by-catches;
- that a detailed study needs to be made of the measures to be adopted and of their impact on the socio-economic situation in the industry;
- the importance of voluntary reductions in fishing effort and the putting in place of mechanisms to make it possible for fishermen to be granted financial compensation for that effort and the adoption of positive market intervention measures to combat discards (guaranteed marketing of fish at fair prices and the development of the canning industry).

Roger Knapman (IND/DEM), in writing. – I support the call for a ban on discards, in line with my party's policy, but I am unable to vote for the resolution as a whole as it includes the establishment of instruments at EU level.

Specifically regarding Amendment 14, whilst I commend the efforts of Scottish fishermen, who have taken a lead in voluntarily reducing the catch of immature fish, I cannot support the implementation of a compensation scheme that is administered by the EU institutions.

Diamanto Manolakou (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) It seems reasonable that measures should be taken to avoid discards so as to protect fish stocks. Let us consider, however, why catches are discarded, at a time when many workers would love to eat more fish.

The reason is capitalist production. Fish catches are a commodity placed on the market to earn a profit for big fishing companies, rather than simply goods to meet dietary needs. If a fishing company estimates that it will not make a profit or, more likely, that the price of certain catches will drop because of plentiful supply, then we can explain why catches are discarded, although there are other reasons as well.

The new proposal is essentially a show of good intentions and reiterates a comparable policy which, according to the report, was supposed to have been applied more than five years ago. We have no objection to certain measures being taken to limit or prohibit discards, but we do have a reservation: some of these measures may be a burden to small- and medium-sized fishing enterprises and may essentially be a pretext for preventing them from fishing freely. In other words, some of the proposals may be an excuse to shrink SMEs and inordinately expand large fishing enterprises.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – Any bid to improve Europe's fisheries policy is positive for Scotland and its fishing industry. The report seeks to research ways of progressively reducing the amount of unwanted by-catches and implementing the banning of discards: two damaging practices that have become far too commonplace in the fisheries sector.

With this view, the report proposes a logical and effective approach to information gathering and calls for simple measures that are both easily enforceable and economically viable. My vote was one in favour of the report's recommendations.

Brian Simpson (PSE), in writing. – As an avid viewer of that great TV series 'Deadliest Catch' I am now a great admirer of fishermen and the work they do. I will be voting in favour of this report because we seriously have to address the waste that goes on, with perfectly good fish being thrown back into the sea because of the workings of the complicated quota system.

Whilst I do not believe that market intervention is the answer here or that quotas should be abandoned, we do need to address seriously this situation.

Our fish stocks are still low. Demand for fish is still growing and therein lies our dilemma. We must preserve our stocks and one way to do this is to eradicate or at least minimise the waste of unwanted by-catches and discards.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – I was surprised to see that Amendment 9 was carried. This amendment means that all fishing vessels would have to have CCTV. There is no explanation of how this would be implemented, no impact assessment has been given to show that it works and no means to show how this would be paid for.

Cornelis Visser (PPE-DE), in writing. – (NL) Today, the European Parliament voted on the report on a policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards. The MEPs from the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the European People's Party (PPE) voted in favour of the final report, as it contains a number of positive points. For example, it recognises that some fish species are known to have a high survival rate on release and that derogations from a discard ban are possible. This is important in the case of juvenile sole, as this species has a very high survival rate. The report also emphasises positive and negative incentives to reduce discards. This approach is more sensible than a total ban on discards. In the view of the CDA/PPE delegation, a total ban on discards is unrealistic.

Thomas Wise (IND/DEM), in writing. – I support the call for a ban on discards, in line with my party's policy, but I am unable to vote for the resolution as a whole as it includes the establishment of instruments at EU level.

Specifically regarding Amendment 14, whilst I commend the efforts of Scottish fishermen, who have taken a lead in voluntarily reducing the catch of immature fish, I cannot support the implementation of a compensation scheme that is administered by the EU institutions.

- Motion for a resolution: A European strategy on the Roma (B6-0050/2008)

Philip Bradbourn (PPE-DE), in writing. – I and my British Conservative colleagues completely and unreservedly condemn all forms of racism and xenophobia and fully support the Roma people in their fight against the discrimination which they face. Nevertheless, this should occur within the mainstream of political policy within each Member State.

We are unable to support this resolution because it increases the possibility of isolating and marginalising the Roma by 'pigeon-holing' them into a separate category and it calls on the Commission to come up with various strategies and action plans which should remain the competence of Member States.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) Social exclusion, poverty and discrimination are problems which the Member States must do their utmost to combat. The Roma minority has been particularly badly affected by these injustices. Nevertheless, we consider that integration policy is best regulated at Member State level.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) We voted in favour of this resolution in the final vote. However, we wish to point out that it is first and foremost the political responsibility of each Member State to resolve problems of ethnic discrimination and questions of social justice within the territory of their respective countries.

There is a hint of bias in a number of the amendments to the resolution tabled by the UEN Group. We have therefore chosen to vote against the amendments of the UEN Group.

The task of the European Union in this context is to highlight the principles of a union of values. Racism and ethnic discrimination in the EU and Europe must be combated. But this must come about through educative and opinion-forming action on the part of each Member State to instil in each new generation an appreciation of the equal value of all human beings.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Citizens of Roma origin are often victims of discrimination in the various EU countries; since it can take many different forms – affecting their political, economic, social or cultural rights – it fosters poverty, social exclusion and disintegration.

Indeed, violation of or the non-exercise of fundamental rights such as the right to health, housing, education, employment with rights and social security, fuels situations of social inequality, marginalisation and ghettoisation, illiteracy, incorporation into the informal economy, and social and political non-participation that many citizens of Roma origin also face.

We therefore need effective policies to combat social inequality, exploitation and the concentration of wealth, create jobs with rights, ensure access to and exercise of the most fundamental rights for the promotion of public services, and eradicate poverty and social exclusion. Basically, policies that force a break with the policies and directions of the European Union, a central issue that the resolution omits.

We do not believe that the solution to the problems that many citizens of Roma origin face lies in adopting 'common policies' at EU level, as the resolution advocates.

Hence our abstention.

Katalin Lévai (PSE), *in writing*. – (HU) In April 2005, the European Parliament adopted a resolution to improve the situation of the Roma, in which it called upon the European Commission to prepare a Roma action plan. Since then, nothing has happened, apart from promises and high-sounding words. The majority of the 12-15 million Roma living in Europe, 10 million of whom have lived in the Union since the 2004 accession, are fighting the same problems, and in poor social conditions, as they have done for years: poverty, exclusion, the problem of integration, the lack of employment, and multiple discrimination against Roma women and children.

The majority of Member States do not regard the Roma as a national minority because of their lack of a mother country, and do not make any substantial changes to their situation. In fact, the experiences of recent years have instead shown that radicalism is growing stronger in both the old and the new Member States. I therefore feel that the time has come for substantial changes. The European Socialist Group has already initiated its action plan, the first stage of which was to produce a resolution with eminent experts from the other parties.

I therefore call on my fellow Members to face this European challenge and to initiate a European Roma Strategy together, with our vote.

Diamanto Manolakou (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The Roma are almost invariably victims of racial discrimination. The non-acceptance of their traditions and culture, and their marginalisation, force them into social exclusion. They fall easy prey to capitalism. Indeed, they are often used as scapegoats and are collectively blamed, as happened recently with the deportations from Italy.

The national governments and the EU restrict themselves to high-sounding declarations, while avoiding concrete measures.

In Greece, as in other countries, the majority of Roma live in wretched conditions, in encampments, without water or drainage. Many are unemployed and have no social security or rights to healthcare. Their children face ever greater problems: child mortality is high, hardly any vaccinations are available and a low percentage of children regularly attend school. Eighty per cent of the Roma community is still illiterate.

Governments must take measures to ensure that the Roma participate as equals in society, and that their cultural traditions are respected. In Greece, we are calling for the establishment of a Centre for Romani and Gypsy Studies, with special emphasis on culture.

Immediate measures must be taken to ensure that they have decent living conditions and inalienable rights to employment, a pension, health and medical care, as well as education.

Like all workers, they are struggling against monopoly interests and the exploitative system.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – The implementation of a strategy on the Roma is something that I am in favour of. I see that the EU urgently needs a strategy to aid in the Roma's inclusion in society. They are one of the continent's largest minority groups and deserve to be recognised as so through a European plan to engage with the issues they are faced with.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (PSSE), *in writing*. – (RO) This resolution is a strategy for the coordination and promotion of European efforts with a view to improving the condition of the Roma population, who are facing a series of difficulties related to discrimination, marginalization, social exclusion and severe poverty. The EU's concern with minorities, including disadvantaged social groups, is also an answer to enlargement including former communist countries with a significant Roma population. Thus the problem takes on a European dimension, no longer being limited to Central and Eastern-European countries.

I voted for this resolution because it brings to the attention of the Member States and European institutions the necessity of taking measures for creating an adequate social and political milieu for the social inclusion of the Roma. Discrimination against the Roma is widespread in public and private life, including access to public office, education, the labour market, healthcare and housing. Member State governments should undertake to reduce the unacceptable rifts between the Roma population and the rest of society, so as to ensure full compliance with the principles underlying the European Union, the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and liberties.

11. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

12. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes

13. Forwarding of texts adopted during the sitting: see Minutes

14. Dates for next sittings: see Minutes

15. Adjournment of the session

President. – (FR) That concludes the agenda.

Wishing everyone bon appétit, particularly our visitors from London who, as you have learned, come from the most beautiful city in the world, capital of the most beautiful country, and who will one day realise that it also belongs to one of the most beautiful continents.

I declare the session of the European Parliament adjourned.

(The sitting was closed at 12.20 p.m.)