

# WEDNESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2008

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

*President*

## 1. Opening of the sitting

*(The sitting was opened at 9.05 p.m.)*

## 2. Composition of political groups: see Minutes

## 3. Treaty of Lisbon (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the report (2007/2286(INI)) (A6-0013/2008) by Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on the Treaty of Lisbon.

**Richard Corbett, rapporteur.** – Mr President, Mr Méndez de Vigo and I have the honour to present this report to Parliament on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. It is a report in which our committee has dwelt not so much on the history of how we got here, but on the simple comparison of whether this new Treaty improves the European Union compared to the current Treaties, whether the Treaties as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon make the European Union more effective, more democratic and better for its citizens. That is what we have done, and our conclusion is clear.

Firstly, on democratic accountability: this Union will have a system whereby any legislation in the future will be subject to the prior scrutiny of national parliaments and then the double approval of the Council of Ministers, composed of ministers accountable to those very same national parliaments, and the European Parliament, directly elected by citizens to represent them at European level. That is a level of scrutiny that exists in no other international structure. You can look at the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, NATO – nothing above the level of the nation state has that in-built degree of parliamentary scrutiny that we will have with this new Treaty.

The new Treaty also improves the powers of the European Parliament in other respects. We will elect the President of the Commission and we will have full power over the whole of the European budget, together with the Council, no longer seeing agricultural expenditure ring-fenced from parliamentary scrutiny. Parliament will have the right to block Commission implementing measures where we disagree with them. Parliament will have the right to repeal the delegation of powers to the Commission if we feel that is necessary. I see the Commissioner is already looking worried, but it is an important democratic safeguard. Parliament will also have the right to make proposals for future revisions of the Treaty, and its right to ratify, to approve international agreements has been extended. This Treaty, if nothing else, is a massive increase in democracy in the European Union.

Secondly, this Treaty improves the situation for citizens of the Union. There is, of course, the Charter of Rights, which, throughout the Union, is a guarantee that Union institutions and Union law cannot violate basic standards of human rights – European institutions will have to respect them. It provides greater clarity for citizens over the competences of the European Union. It also provides adequate guarantees to allay the misplaced fears of some that we are developing some kind of centralised superstate in the European Union.

Finally, the Treaty will make the European Union more effective, more capable of delivering in those policy areas where we want to act together at European level. The extension of qualified majority voting, the rationalisation of the size of the Commission, the merging together of the external representation posts into a single High Representative, the longer-term presidency of the European Council and other measures should make our machinery more capable of acting effectively and, therefore, our Union more capable of delivering in those policy areas where we want it to deliver.

So all these are dramatic improvements. There are some, of course, who will bemoan the loss of the Constitution – a Constitution that was, after all, ratified by a large majority of the Member States. Even in those countries that had referendums, in total 26.6 million people voted in favour of it and 23 million against. Even in my country, it was approved at second reading in the House of Commons by a large majority of 215. So it was a popular Constitution in most respects, but the test is to win the grand slam of 27 'yesses' and zero

'nos'. That is the very high threshold that it faced. It did not get through that. That was why it was abandoned by the Member States and, instead, we have reverted to amending the Treaties that we had before. However, the content of these amendments makes our Union more democratic, more effective and friendlier to citizens. I commend it to the House.

*(Applause)*

**Íñigo Méndez de Vigo**, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Mr President, I would also like to join you in congratulating Richard Corbett. I think that this collaboration between Richard Corbett and a member of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats shows what Europe ultimately is: that, even though we have different ideas and sensitivities, we are capable of doing things together; we are capable of making progress to improve the life of Europeans. I would therefore like to thank Richard Corbett for his collaboration and cooperation, which has always been loyal, and has always, I would like to stress, been aimed at doing things together, building, not at being negative or destroying.

Mr President, three years ago Richard Corbett and I presented the Constitutional Treaty to this House, and we are now European Parliament rapporteurs on the Lisbon Treaty. It is clear, Mr President, that some of us were more ambitious than this Lisbon Treaty, and I think that this House was more ambitious. It is also clear that this is a unique situation. The ratification process had not proceeded, so a political solution had to be found, and the Lisbon Treaty is a political solution. Once again, this is Europe: it is seeking agreements, seeking commitments in order to find a way out of crises and get out of sticky situations.

Mr Corbett has given a very good explanation, and I therefore echo his words concerning the advantages of the Lisbon Treaty over the Treaties currently in force. I would like to add one thing that Richard Corbett did not say: the Lisbon Treaty is not the Constitutional Treaty. We had to leave many of our ambitions by the wayside, which I regret, but I also think that the essential elements of the Constitutional Treaty are in the Lisbon Treaty. Although it is not the same, we have managed to retain the essential elements.

What are the essential elements, then? What do we gauge as essential? The essential elements are those that will enable the European Union to be more democratic, those that will enable the European Union to be more efficient, those, in short, that will enable the European Union to provide added value for citizens.

Mr President, this is the only thing that should motivate the European Parliament. We are the representatives of the European people and they should be the point of reference for our actions. We are living in a very important time for Europe. We saw this yesterday, with the situation in Kosovo.

Europe must provide an outlet for the expectations that the European people have placed on us. Europe cannot adopt a head-in-the-sand policy. Europe needs to have a voice in the world, it needs to have a presence, and it needs to resolve the problems that exist now, whether that means climate change, combating illegal immigration or combating nuclear proliferation. We need to tackle these problems.

The Lisbon Treaty, and this is a key question, ladies and gentlemen, gives us the tools and power to do this; obviously there will then have to be the political will to do this, but in this Treaty we have the tools to improve the current situation.

Allow me to say something about building, about doing things together. As I said before, this is Europe. Supporting the Lisbon Treaty means doing things together, following the same path. It is true, as I said before, that we have abandoned some things. Paul Valéry, who was a great poet, and therefore perhaps also a great European, said that a poem is never finished, only abandoned. It is true that we have abandoned some things, but it is also true that, in the future, if we need to recover them, the European Parliament will be in the vanguard.

*(Applause)*

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.

On behalf of the Presidency I would like to welcome this opportunity to debate the Treaty of Lisbon. I would first like to thank the European Parliament for its work and, most of all, for the report prepared by Richard Corbett and Íñigo Méndez de Vigo.

I must say from the outset that I agree with the positive assessment of many elements of the new treaty. The fact is that Europe has for some time been faced with internal and external challenges in the international community.

That is why we undoubtedly need reforms. The desire to continue the process of improving the efficiency of the European Union and its democratic legitimacy led the leaders of the Member States to sign the treaty in Lisbon in December last year.

Much has been said about the many benefits the Lisbon Treaty will bring. I will therefore mention just the main ones. Firstly, it will ensure that all institutions that sustain or link the 27 Member States operate more successfully. It will improve the efficiency and simplify decision-making processes. It will increase democracy and the transparency of operations and – this is very important – make the operations of the European Union less remote from its citizens.

Our common aim is to enforce the Lisbon Treaty from 1 January 2009. To achieve this, our priority task is ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by all the Member States. May I take this opportunity to congratulate those five Member States which have already done this.

The Presidency is aware that the ratification procedures fall within the exclusive and sovereign competence of the Member States. Nevertheless I think that we may allow ourselves to express a wish that the procedures run their course unobstructed, smoothly and without complications. We are convinced that the Lisbon Treaty is a good instrument and a fine document which will make it easier to confront the contemporary challenges facing the European Union.

Full enforcement and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty requires certain preparatory actions. The Presidency is aware of all these problems and the related need for a unified framework within which to conduct these preparatory actions. We have established more intensive cooperation with the next Presidency (France) and with other institutions. The Presidency will ensure that this preparatory work is conducted under supervision at the highest political level, that is to say the European Council, which will follow progress closely.

I would like to stress that many aspects of the new treaty may be realised only if proposed by the European Commission or in close cooperation with the European Parliament. The Presidency is aware of these aspects and in each case will conduct the preparations in a way that will involve all the parties concerned.

I would like to finish by stating that all those involved in the preparatory work have acted responsibly. I hope that such conduct will continue because that is the best way of contributing to the success of the ratification procedures and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

**Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission.** – Mr President, first of all can I say welcome to this report and congratulate both rapporteurs for their work in bringing it to plenary. The Commission, of course, fully shares the view that the Treaty of Lisbon is a very positive step for the future of the Union. As we have already heard, it will bring us further down the road to a more effective, more democratic and more transparent Union.

In politics it is important to do the right things, because that is what gives us democratic legitimacy. But it is equally important to do things right. So what we are doing in choosing the political agenda of climate change and energy, roaming charges, toy and food safety, transport policy or agricultural policy or trade or what have you, is extremely important, and we are not going to put our feet up until the new Treaty is in force. But, at the same time, we must also look at the other side of the coin, how we do things and how the Treaty will change the way we do things; how we can become more effective in taking decisions and furthering the political agenda and the priorities of this European Union.

One of the core elements of this Treaty is how it strengthens Europe's democratic legitimacy through changing the role of Parliament, more codecision, a greater say in budgetary matters and international agreements, and a direct link between the results of the European elections and the choice of the Commission President.

It will also provide channels for the greater involvement of national parliaments. We already have, through these, very positive experience in engaging with national parliaments, in anchoring the policies of the European Union, as well as some elements of participatory democracy for the direct participation of citizens.

Your report, of course, also expresses some concerns on the abandoning of the constitutional approach and on the extension of opt-in arrangements for particular Member States. We all know – and I have said this before – that this was the price we had to pay to reach a consensus agreement, and I guess we all realise that nothing is perfect – not even the new Reform Treaty is perfect. It is a compromise, but it is something that we have been able to agree upon.

Ratification is now under way but, with five Member States having approved the Treaty and ten more having launched their procedures, there is clearly still a long way to go, and there is no inevitability about the process.

In the mean time, we need to prepare for what we hope will be the entry into force of the Treaty at the beginning of next year, and the Slovenian Presidency has presented a list of issues where action needs to be taken for its implementation. Preliminary discussions have already taken place on a number of issues, and these will continue over the coming months. Some of these issues are subject to Commission proposals, for example, the Citizens' Initiative, which is an important provision to help connect the Union with citizens.

I am willing to do all I can to ensure that Europeans can use this new democratic tool as soon as possible after the Treaty enters into force. It requires a Commission proposal to be ready in time, and at the same time it is important to consult fully before adopting a proposal. We will of course keep you informed of further developments, and we look forward to working together on this issue.

Communication with citizens during the ratification process – whatever method for ratification is chosen – as outlined by the European Council in June, is also vital. For this purpose, and as also recommended in your report, we are working closely with national authorities and the European Parliament offices.

Can I therefore thank you for calling, in your report, for sincere cooperation between EU institutions and national authorities in order to inform European citizens clearly and objectively about the content of the Treaty. This is fully in line with our approach, and we are pleased to share with Parliament and its offices in the Member States our communication products and information materials on the Treaty – and we have good things to communicate: a Treaty that will give us the tools to move forward in developing the policies that the opinion polls tell us, every time, our citizens want: climate change and energy, migration issues, growth and jobs, the environment and, of course, the EU's role on the global scene. These are the things that will help us to do both the right things and do them right.

**Andrew Duff**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*. – Mr President, one of the strongest features of the Treaty will be that it marks the coming of age of the common foreign security and defence policy. It proposes radical changes to the structure of the EU, notably by upgrading the High Representative as Vice-President of the Commission and a chair of the Council, with a tripartite service of diplomats beneath him. It is crucial that these arrangements are firmly in place as soon as the Treaty comes into force: delay and quarrelling for the spoils of victory will confuse third countries and cause cynicism within European public opinion.

I strongly commend the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to Parliament.

**Thijs Berman**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Development*. – (NL) Mr President, the new Treaty offers great opportunities for development cooperation. This is chiefly because this new Treaty requires that the Commission's action in the field of development cooperation complement the Member States' own initiatives. This opens up the opportunity for better coordination between the Commission and Member States at long last – which is essential, and which was also called for by the very critical OECD DAC Peer Review.

The focus is on poverty reduction, which is good. A key sentence has been dropped from the Treaty of Nice: the sentence explicitly excluding the European Development Fund (EDF) from the scope of the Treaty – which means that the EDF can now be included in the EU budget. This is highly necessary, as it gives the European Parliament full democratic control over the other half of the EU's development activities too, at last – which is both necessary and good. Without constant control by the European Parliament, however, poverty reduction will not be able to take centre stage in EU foreign policy, still less without the appointment of a separate European Commissioner for Development in future.

**Carlos Carnero González**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on International Trade*. – (ES) Mr President, first of all I would like to congratulate the co-rapporteurs on the magnificent work they have done and to thank them because, perhaps as an exception to what usually happens in this House, they have succeeded in including the principal suggestion made by the Committee on International Trade with regard to the drawing up of the Lisbon Treaty.

The Treaty maintains the essential elements of the European Constitution in this respect, and this is very important because, in addition to once again stating that common commercial policy is an exclusive competence of the EU and extending its scope, it also introduces the Community method for decision making

under the policy, which means more democracy and more effectiveness, which, after all, is the main message that we need to convey to citizens through the Lisbon Treaty.

I was a member of the Convention. I am proud that the Lisbon Treaty incorporates the essential elements of the Constitution that we drew up, which was endorsed by the majority of countries at the time, but as the co-rapporteur Mr Méndez de Vigo said, I would also like to say that this is not the end of the road, it is not the end of the story. For this reason, the Committee on International Trade also points out some matters that were left out.

We therefore have the reality, which is good – this Treaty – and we have the horizon, which will be better in the future through what we achieve.

**Costas Botopoulos**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Budgets*. – (EL) Mr President, I have had the honour of being the rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets on the changes being brought about in the budget sector. It is one of the least known subjects, but I believe it to be one of the most interesting and most typical in the context of what we are debating today, namely the general changes that the Lisbon Treaty is bringing about in our lives.

In the budget sector, Parliament assumes a role equal to that of the Council. There is no longer a distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure. From now on we decide on everything as a Parliament, particularly on agricultural policy, and this is extremely important. Something else is afoot. An ongoing change is taking place in the distribution of roles between Parliament and the Council within the budgetary procedure. This lies in the future; we cannot be certain of the outcome. I think that this applies to the Lisbon Treaty in general.

The Lisbon Treaty introduces a package of politically far-reaching changes that will serve as a foundation for our political agenda. I believe that this new political agenda is what the EU needs today.

Now, it is wrong to say that the Lisbon Treaty is the end of the road. On the contrary, it is an important step allowing us to operate in a better and more successful framework with greater possibilities for Parliament. This is especially important, if we bear in mind the lessons learnt from the experience of the European Constitution. The crucially important outcome of the tortuous road to Lisbon is that Europe did not close in on itself or become more defensive; it became more social. As a result, there are now more social clauses, and more rights. An attempt is being made to open Europe up to the outside by means of this procedure. This, I think, is the most significant lesson; it is why the Lisbon Treaty ought to be ratified.

**Ján Hudacký**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*. – (SK) The new European Treaty, although imperfect in some aspects, represents an important instrument for further and deeper integration of the Member States, as well as for more effective and flexible functioning of structures and institutions both between the individual Member States of the European Union and between the EU and the outside world.

At the same time the Treaty opens the door for further enlargement of the Union to include new Member States, so that many people's dreams of a common European home can come true. The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which has become a legal component of the Treaty, has of course its own great significance. However, because it is not very explicit, it can give rise to some questions about natural human rights. The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy is of the opinion that the new Treaty offers enough space for the realisation of common policies on the one hand, and on the other hand, within the principle of subsidiarity, ensures that the Member States have sufficient competence to push ahead with their own competition policies and strategies, for example in the area of industry.

The European Research Area will strengthen the scientific and technological platform. This will result in an easier transfer of scientific knowledge and technology and in unlimited cooperation between scientists and researchers, regardless of borders. As regards the space research programmes, we are pleased that the Treaty offers a platform for a European space policy and explicitly provides for appropriate cooperation with the European Space Agency.

An important success of the Treaty is the agreement on a common energy policy, with emphasis on improvement of the internal energy market, guaranteeing safe supplies, energy efficiency and savings, developing renewable sources and improving network interconnection. The fact that the Treaty allows individual Member States to continue to make decisions about their own energy mix is also an advantage. In addition, I am glad to be able to say that the Treaty includes the Euratom Protocol, which will retain its

original legal effect: I am sure that this will create the conditions necessary for the logical and safe development of nuclear energy.

**Gérard Deprez**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs expresses its support for the report by our fellow Members Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo. We welcome in particular the fact that the report highlights – this is obvious but it is good to mention it – that it is in the area of freedom, security and justice that the Treaty of Lisbon brings in the most changes, with, in particular, the pillars being discontinued and judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation being brought under the ‘Community’ method.

However, although this is an important breakthrough, in our sector it is still accompanied by a reservation that is difficult to accept. Our fellow Members ought to know that under the Treaty of Lisbon, all the measures that would have been adopted under the third pillar before the Treaty came into force will remain beyond the control of the Commission, and moreover, of the European Court of Justice for a period of five years in such sensitive areas as respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

We find this restrictive provision difficult to swallow, Mr President, and today we confirm our determination to render it ineffective for all the acts to be adopted before the end of the current parliamentary term. We hope that interinstitutional negotiations between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council can begin as soon as possible to reach agreement on how to overcome this difficulty.

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Vice-President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, like everyone else, I would first like to offer our thanks and congratulations to our fellow members Íñigo Méndez de Vigo and Richard Corbett for the report on the Treaty of Lisbon and particularly for the excellent work they have done. As a friend, however, I can also tell them that that is what they are paid for.

Our debate comes at a time when five Member States have already ratified this Treaty and Poland has announced that it is preparing to start its ratification process. On behalf of the members of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, and within the PPE-DE Group, I would like to reiterate how important this Treaty is for the revival of the European dynamic.

After two years of deadlock and institutional misgivings, the European Union has given itself the tools it needs to function effectively. PPE-DE members believe this Treaty makes the EU more democratic, more visible and therefore more influential within its own borders and in the world.

The Treaty of Lisbon signals the return to politics in Europe. The increased democracy, clarity and visibility, and the strengthening of the European Union’s effectiveness have been highlighted by our rapporteurs as the major advances of the Treaty of Lisbon. Democracy is strengthened by extending the powers of the European Parliament, the only institution elected by direct universal suffrage. Codecision becomes the rule. The President of the Commission will be elected by the European Parliament. The role of the national parliaments will be enhanced on matters of subsidiarity. This is something our group is very keen on. Europe will no longer be absent from national debates. They will not have an excuse to criticise us any more. Citizens will now have the right of initiative. By collecting a million signatures from the citizens of the 27 Member States, they will be able to issue a direct invitation to the Commission to present a new proposal.

In addition, the rights of citizens will be protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the binding legal force of which is enshrined in the Treaty. We are very proud of this advance. With the opening to the public of legislative debates in the Council, Europe will be more transparent, and with clarification of the European Union’s competences, its functioning will become more comprehensible.

The expansion of qualified majority voting in the Council will reduce the risk of institutional deadlock and make it possible to implement necessary common policies. Furthermore, Europe will affirm its role as a political actor on the international stage. Where it is competent, the EU will make its voice heard and make the decisions required for energy policy, foreign policy, judicial and police cooperation and environmental policy.

Regarding energy, the Treaty introduces a legal basis for a European policy on energy supply and renewable energies. In foreign policy, the EU will finally be represented by a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In the face of a changing world, with many challenges of all kinds, the

European Union must have the means to affirm its position as a key player to its partners throughout the world.

I already noticed, a little while ago in the Middle East, that more was being asked of Europe, not just that Europe should pay but that it should bring its full political weight to bear, and this will also be the case in Kosovo and the Balkans. In the field of police and judicial cooperation, it is essential that the EU takes robust, coordinated measures to fight the globalisation of crime and terrorist threats.

The Treaty of Lisbon gives the EU the means to undertake far-reaching reforms to achieve this. Through being more intelligible and more united, the European Union will be able to assert itself as the world leader in the fight against global warming. It will also send clear messages to the emerging countries encouraging them to adopt a genuine sustainable development strategy.

The members of the PPE-DE truly believe that these areas should be the subject of European policies. Of course, many of us – as the rapporteurs point out – deplore the fact that the constitutional approach has had to abandon any mention of the symbols of Europe.

The big challenge now is the ratification of the Treaty. On behalf of PPE-DE members, I call upon the Member States to follow the lead of Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Malta and France, and to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon promptly, so it can enter into force by 2009.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope that today, the chairman of the Socialist Group, Martin Schulz, will follow my example.

*(Applause)*

**Martin Schulz**, *on behalf of the PSE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in giving my remarks I can certainly save myself the effort of having to go into the details of the Corbett-Méndez de Vigo report once again. The rapporteurs and co-rapporteurs of the attendant committees have themselves done so well enough. Therefore, in the middle of my remarks, I can take the liberty of asking a rather more basic question, a question associated with the fact that on a day like today, when the European Parliament is delivering its opinion on a fundamental achievement in the history of European unity, we might pause for a moment and allow ourselves to ask: why are we doing this? What is the actual aim of this practice? Why do we need this Treaty?

In the history of the people of this continent, 100 years is a short time. However, when you look back 100 years to 1908, a Sultan governed Turkey. Russia was ruled by the Tsars. This city here was part of the German Reich ruled by Wilhelm II. France had a vast colonial empire and Great Britain its own Empire. Fifty years ago, Adolf Hitler's takeover – which took place 75 years ago – was already 25 years in the past. In the meantime Joseph Stalin had been committing his atrocious crimes, Auschwitz had happened and 50 years ago the Soviet Union, led by Nikita Khrushchev and the United States, governed by Eisenhower, sealed the post-war order of Yalta. Twenty-five years ago the power of the Soviet Union was exhausted and the world instead set off on the wrong track – as far as the economy was concerned – of 'Reaganomics'.

Today we cannot even imagine what will be happening in 25 years' time. One thing is certain: the only chance that the states that ruled half the world 100 years ago – France and Great Britain – still have of being able to secure their influence in the world today and of perhaps still being able to play a part in 25, 50 and 100 years' time, is not that we put up attractive flags, but that we ask the question: how do I guarantee, in a smaller world with limited influence – because there are far more players, such as China, India and the Latin American continent, for instance – how do I guarantee as a responsible politician in this global village that my people, my country, are able to play their part in global democracy, welfare and social stability?

We can no longer go it alone. We can only do it together – the Europeans, at any rate. Perhaps the United States can survive on its own in this global-style competition. Perhaps China, too, and perhaps India – although China and India are already concluding cooperation agreements of a technological nature with each other. When we talk about this Treaty, I would very much like to talk again about why we never actually discuss the fact that the Industry and Development Ministers of China and India have been meeting over the past year to conclude a cooperation agreement.

Here are two countries, which make up a third of the world's population, concluding a cooperation agreement! And we Europeans, what are we doing? We are staying on the right track, albeit not consistently enough and not completely, but we are staying on the right track, the track described by the saying: unity is strength! Anyone who goes it alone will lose out in the long run. Anyone who sails in an escorted convoy, anyone

who brings a ship safely in, not behind a flagship, but in a line of ships on an equal footing, will win – whether we are a large state or a small one, we are all on an equal footing in this Union. However, we join forces in a framework that enables us to cooperate economically, socially and democratically as equals with other regions of this world, to safeguard human rights and peace in the world. That is the purpose of this Treaty!

Therefore, we social democrats, we socialists in this House, want to endorse this Treaty and the opinion of our rapporteurs on this Treaty out of a deep conviction because we believe that this is the right path. To those who preached 100 years ago that the world was to recover in the German manner or that the *Pax Britannica* was to dominate the world, or that in the *Communauté Française* French superiority was to reign, or that the Caesaropapism prevailing in Moscow at the time meant that we were to worship one person as Emperor and God; to those who told the world that the flag behind which we would have to assemble was the most important thing, and not the spirit of the peace we consider most important; to those who maintained that nationalism and national primacy would lead to the objective, to those we can only say that the 100 years of history behind us proves the opposite.

François Mitterrand was right when he said in this House that nationalism ultimately always meant one thing: war. In European history, evidence has been offered to suggest that ultra-nationalism always means war. We would counter this with: nationalism is never the solution of the future! Solidarity among the nations: that is the solution of the future, that is the purpose of the Treaty.

(Applause)

**Andrew Duff**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the world awaits a European Union with a stronger capacity to act across the world stage.

Inside the Union there are plenty of people who wish to see an end to the seemingly interminable quarrels about our system of government. Although I have enjoyed myself in the IGC and previously in the Convention, I think I can speak for us all in saying that we share the opinion that we should settle some of these quarrelsome problems for a substantial time. Certainly, I look forward to a time when we can focus on improving the quality of policy which flows out of Brussels and Strasbourg. That time will come when the Treaty of Lisbon is brought into force, because it successfully connects policy change with desirable and necessary reforms to powers, to instruments and to procedures.

There are some – certainly in this Chamber – who would prefer to reject the Treaty and turn the clock back to Nice, and perhaps even further to 19th-century thinking. These people include, unfortunately, the British Conservative Party, which fails to proffer a shared European solution to the common problems that we all face as Europeans.

I know that the United Kingdom is a strangely insular place, and it is true that even its Government is too frightened to face up to nationalists and xenophobes and has insisted on asserting self-defeating opt-outs from key areas of European unity, sometimes pushing Britain to the margins. Liberal Democrats regret that, and look forward to the time when the UK will find a more comfortable place within the stronger and more united democratic and efficient Union promised by this great Treaty.

(Applause)

**Brian Crowley**, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. — (GA) Mr President, the leaders of the European Union signed the Reform Treaty on the European Union last December. This Treaty will ensure that the European Union will operate more effectively in the years to come.

A more effective Union means a stronger economy for Europe and for Ireland. Any body which as been around for fifty years makes changes in order to address new challenges. The Irish people have very good reasons for voting in favour of this Treaty.

The economic and financial benefits coming from involvement within the European Union are self-evident to anybody in any Member State. Indeed, the single market is one of the most important developments that we have seen over the last 30 years of development within the European Union. And, obviously, any organisation that started off with six Member States does require rule changes as it advances and as it grows.

That is why I believe the Irish people, in the upcoming referendum on this Treaty, will vote in favour. They will vote in favour because they have seen huge foreign direct investment into Ireland. They have seen huge development with regard to infrastructure and social development on the island of Ireland. They have seen tremendous work being created on peace on the island of Ireland, bringing together formerly divided



communities. And those that would point the finger and say 'Europe is wrong' or 'Europe is bad', and 'look at the kind of things it is going to do', totally ignore the evidence on the ground: social development, economic development, cultural development. In fact many people, when they speak about Europe acting on the world stage, forget that, in 2006 alone, the European Union of 27 Member States contributed EUR 46 billion towards the developing world: the largest donor of developing aid in the whole world.

That is why I am confident that the Irish people, when this is explained to them properly in the coming months, will guarantee that we will ratify this Treaty.

**Johannes Voggelhuber**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it has taken eight years, two Conventions, three intergovernmental conferences and two draft treaties to achieve the result that we are evaluating today. Allow me at this point, and after this lengthy period, to offer my personal thanks for the opportunity to represent this House in both conventions and to be present both for the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Constitution, together with Andrew Duff, as EP rapporteur. It was for me the greatest honour of my political life. Thank you very much.

The contents and achievements of this Treaty can be seen in detail, and few they are not! The foundation is being laid for the first supranational treaty in history. The most up-to-date and most comprehensive code of fundamental rights is becoming European law. The anchoring of social objectives and rights is pointing the way to the next task: the creation and construction of a European social union. With its own legal personality, the Union is changing from a forum of loosely cooperating states to a historic, independent player. If we want to succeed in reviving this treaty, political unity will need to cease being a project of elites and state chancelleries and become a *res publica*.

Today, however, I am not quite sure whether we are aware that we are making this assessment in very difficult and special circumstances in European history. In the latest edition of *Der Spiegel*, I have read the statements by Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State, which concluded: 'Europeans do not want to understand'. Even though I well understand Mr Schulz's initial instinctive head-shaking, I would like in this case to quote a voice from outside on this. Henry Kissinger describes the disappearance of the nation-state in Europe as the foremost challenge of our time. He writes: 'The problem now is: nation-states have not just given up part of their sovereignty to the European Union but also part of their vision for their own future. Their future is now tied to the European Union, and the EU has not yet achieved a vision and loyalty comparable to the nation-state. There is, therefore, a vacuum between Europe's past and Europe's future.'

This is the best description we have of this Treaty at the moment. It shines a penetrating light on what governments have been doing with the draft Constitution, because these marginal notes and the changes we ourselves have constantly been making to the packaging in order to safeguard the achievements, and then trying to endorse while holding our noses, signify a loss of European spirit and power, creating identity, producing loyalty and winning over citizens. The power to establish new beginnings, create new orders, provide new solutions, again and again, making a new start every day: that is Europe. This power was very much weakened because of the – I will be quite frank here – reactionary attitude of national governments and state chancelleries empowered by the language of the European Constitution and the reforms associated with it. Nor should this awareness desert us in view of the genuine achievements of this Treaty. Having not succeeded in making the citizens sovereigns of the European Union, it is this Parliament's first task in future to comply with the spirit of this Constitution, to turn the Union into a union of citizens, rather than states, and to find the strength to make a *res publica* out of European integration and demonstrate Europe's strength by creating new identities together with the citizens.

(Applause)

**Mary Lou McDonald**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – Mr President, the Lisbon Treaty will be subjected to the democratic scrutiny of the people in Ireland alone. There is clearly a fear of referendums in other states, and I find myself asking why. Why so, when we talk so much about democracy? Who here fears the voice of the people?

In this Chamber, we speak the language of peace, and yet Lisbon commits us to further increases in Union military spending and to continuing support for the armaments industry in Europe. Why do we insist on emulating the United States? Do we really believe that creating its European equivalent will promote a peaceful world? I do not.

We continue with the myth that the EU values public services and workers' rights, when all the evidence on the ground contradicts this. Ask the people of Vaxholm or the workers of Irish Ferries about the EU's commitment to the vindication of workers' rights.

Why is it that we congratulate ourselves on being substantial donors of aid to developing countries and, at the same time, we devise partnership agreements that force poor countries to lay bare their markets to European economic ambition?

How can any of us here today who believe in democracy, peace or public services support the Lisbon Treaty? This Treaty is not about reform or efficiency; it is a *carte blanche* for further erosion of democracy, and its self-amending clauses alone are evidence of this. It is a charter for further privatisation. It offers no advance on the environment, nothing new on the protection of workers' rights and it gives powerful EU institutions a free hand to further militarise our Union. Would the people of Europe support such a Treaty? I believe they would not, and perhaps that is why they are not being asked.

As an Irishwoman, as a proud European, I want my country to have the freedom to take decisions in the best interests of our people. I want all Member States, large and small, to enjoy that right equally. Collectively and democratically, we can bring about positive change, delivering for our people and delivering for the global village. We need to reform the European Union to enable us to achieve these things, to create the Europe that our people want and deserve. The Lisbon Treaty is a bad deal for Ireland, it is a bad deal for Europe and it is a bad deal for the wider world.

**Nigel Farage**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – Mr President, what the European Parliament is engaged in here today, with this debate and subsequent vote, is nothing less than a massive exercise in deceit. A pack of lies is being told because you do not want the peoples of Europe to have the referendums that you promised them. This represents an imposition of the will of the political class upon the citizens.

We all know the truth, which is that the Lisbon Treaty is the same as the EU Constitution – with exactly the same number of new competences and exactly the same number of surrenders of veto. It is virtually identical in every regard and it is a constitutional treaty, because it gives the European Union full legal personality, and, worse still, gives it the ability to amend itself in the future without having to refer to any more intergovernmental conferences. It gives the EU the ability to legislate over literally every single aspect of our lives.

I am told, though, that I should not worry, because the flag and the anthem have been dropped. Well, pull the other one! There is a great big flag in front of us here. It is nonsense. It is all part of the lie. The truth is that you are too chicken to have a referendum. You do not want to hear the voice of the people, and now you are resorting to totalitarian means to get this Treaty through.

We heard Mr Cohn-Bendit say that those who oppose this Treaty are mentally ill. We heard Mr Schulz say that those of us who objected to the sheer dishonesty of this project were behaving like Nazis back in the 1930s. Well, I think the ordinary decent citizens of Europe will work out for themselves who the extremists are.

I must say that I wish the people of Ireland, and those who believe in democracy, every success in a couple of months' time. I hope they send out a large resounding 'no', and I hope the voice of the peoples of Europe will be heard, and not just your voice, the voice of the political class. You may be complacent today, but you are increasingly being held in contempt.

**Jim Allister (NI)**. – Mr President, I reject this report and I reject the Treaty that it supports. Before the French and Dutch referendums, we heard much empty talk in this House about the will of the people. Why? Because, in their arrogance, the EU political elite believed that the people would be conned by their propaganda about the Constitution. Suddenly, when the people caught on, they ran with their tail between their legs and have been running ever since, petrified that the voters would reject them again.

That is why the key focus of the last three years has been on hatching an intergovernmental conspiracy to foist this Constitution on the peoples of Europe without daring to ask them their opinion. Such arrogance, such tyranny: fitting, of course, because this Constitution is all about transferring more and more national powers to Brussels despots – those who are, indeed, too chicken for a referendum.

**József Szájer (PPE-DE)**. – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, may I first of all point out that it is unacceptable for anyone in this House to proclaim himself or herself to be the sole spokesperson of the

people and to speak of everybody else as representing only the opinion of the political elite. This is an unacceptable attitude.

There are many of us in this Chamber, and there are many citizens in Europe represented by us, who think that a stronger Europe is needed. In recent times the new Member States have also realised that the problem with Europe is not that it limits our sovereignty or takes away our opportunities, but that it is not sufficiently capable of joint action. This new treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, will provide the means to do just that.

Of course there are also many of us who are not wholly satisfied with what the Lisbon Treaty entails. At the same time, we have to say that the time is ripe – after the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified – for an era in which we can put the new Europe, this new structure that the Lisbon Treaty creates, into action. In other words, we need a stronger Europe and a calm period of consolidation in the years ahead.

I am particularly pleased that the document also expressly prohibits discrimination against individuals belonging to minorities. In the European Union we talk a great deal about values and about diversity, but European protection of minorities has been on a shaky footing up to now. This opportunity, and the passage that refers to it, opens up new ways for Europe to translate the rhetoric usually associated with these issues into reality. After all, we cannot talk of values and common principles if we leave the building blocks of Europe, the minorities and individual ethnic communities, out of the process.

I welcome the treaty and congratulate the rapporteurs.

**Hannes Swoboda (PSE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, a great deal has already been said about what people in Europe want. I can go along with the previous speaker in asking: you want a stronger European Union. Why? Some see globalisation as a great opportunity and want Europe to use this opportunity too. Many – probably more – people see globalisation as a danger. They are afraid of it and want Europe to help them overcome its disadvantages.

The question here, of course, is: what is the Reform Treaty – this Treaty on which both rapporteurs have drawn up a very good report – giving back? The answer is clear: the Reform Treaty strengthens the European Union without doing away with democracy. On the contrary: there is an excess of democracy for the European Parliament, for the national parliaments, and yet a capacity for action by the European Union, which this Treaty creates. This is what is crucial. I am therefore of the opinion that many of the citizens' interests are well represented.

What should we do, therefore, with this common capacity to act, which also finds expression specifically through a High Representative, who can do more as Vice-President of the Commission for a common foreign and security policy? Together, for example, with the energy issues and with the additional energy competence that the Reform Treaty gives the European Union, we could in the end be pursuing a legally competent foreign energy policy bringing us into a better starting position with regard to Russia and other major energy powers. Together with the foreign trade competence we can also better represent the interests of our employees and our economy in international trade relations. Together with our environmental competence we can also ensure that our emissions trading and the other environmental targets we want to reach do not mean that our economy and our employees will be damaged, but that the environment is better understood across the globe.

It is the Reform Treaty's great merit – I, too, therefore clearly support the work of the rapporteurs – to ensure that the European Union becomes more capable of action and more democratic at the same time.

**Bronisław Geremek (ALDE).** – (PL) Mr President, the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty by the countries of the European Union will be a major event in the history of Europe and in the history of the European Union. The report presented to us today has given Parliament the potential to state clearly how important it is to adopt the Lisbon Treaty.

My hope is that it will be ratified as it was signed. I am pleased that my country, Poland, is announcing the rapid ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. I would also like to think that there is internal unity between the Treaty that has been ratified and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter of Fundamental Rights defines a world of values, the ideological foundation stone of the European Union. It would therefore be an incomprehensible act – I would go so far as to say an act of political schizophrenia – to divide these two acts. These two acts are strongly mutually linked.

I am convinced that the Lisbon Treaty provides the potential for our Union to become more united as a team. It establishes the mechanisms. It is not the case that this Treaty sets up a rigid and unambiguously defined

legal framework. It sets up mechanisms through which the European Union will now be able to entrench its integration. This Treaty creates a future in which the European Union has a political dimension. It creates a future in which the European Union is capable of forging policies of solidarity. It creates a situation in which many of the European Union's institutions can work together, and perhaps most importantly of all, it creates a place for the citizen with his everyday concerns, his desire to take part in the European process.

I think that through this Treaty a European spirit is being forged, which will in fact enable this Treaty too to be interpreted. The ambiguities of the Treaty create a sphere especially for Parliament, but also for all institutions, to come up with the facts of what it is that we want to build, because the role the President of the European Union will play, or the President of Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the High Representative – all depends on people, and on cooperation. I will venture to say, Mr President, that I hope that in future all these four major responsibilities within the European Union will originate from election. I think that even now the Lisbon Treaty would enable the roles of the President of the Commission and the President of the Union to be combined. This move would strengthen the European Union.

**Bogdan Pęk (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, the process of European integration is not something bad in itself; quite the contrary, in fact. If it were to be conducted honestly, on principles of solidarity and a genuine expansion of democracy, it could be accepted universally. Meanwhile, the spirit that is emanating from this building and from the European Union today is one of universal hypocrisy. There can be no doubt that setting up this quasi-European state, on the principles laid down in the Treaty, will significantly restrict genuine democracy, which will effectively become a democracy in name only.

In Parliament itself, there is a restriction on democracy of expression and manifestation of political will by MEPs. European institutions and the European bureaucracy are taking on key powers, and the largest state is not in a position to de-legalise a clearly fascist party that is calling for a change in European borders.

You are speaking today about a common energy policy. Why is there not universal outrage in this House at the pipeline that Germany and Russia are to run through the Baltic Sea, going over the heads of Poland, Lithuania and Estonia, in order to give Russia the opportunity to cut off energy supplies to these countries? That is why we have no faith in your good intentions. This faith is the foundation of the future, because building can only be based on truth.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, I fully accept that it is necessary, in a European Union of 27 Member States, to update the working rules and arrangements which operated in a Union of 15 and less. I also accept that much of the content of the Lisbon Treaty, such as the increase in powers of this Parliament and the opening-up of Council decision-making, is positive and sensible. However, looking at the detail from my viewpoint as a representative of Scotland, I have serious concerns about some of the imperfections, as Commissioner Wallström acknowledged.

Firstly, much is made of the new right of national parliaments to intervene, but this of course does not apply to the devolved, national Parliament of Scotland or indeed to other stateless nations.

Secondly, the treaty process failed to address the issue of a single seat for the European Parliament, leaving us with the indefensible situation of trekking between Brussels and Strasbourg.

Thirdly, I cannot support the inclusion of the common fisheries policy (CFP) as one of only four exclusive competences of the Union listed in the Treaty. This, I fear, could seriously impede progress towards radical reform and change in fisheries management, by preserving the over-centralised failure which the CFP has become. This is particularly incongruous at a time when the Council, last December, took a tentative step towards decentralisation, when it recognised the voluntary measures being implemented by Scotland and gave it an element of local control this year.

My party favoured a referendum on the Constitution. This Treaty may be different in legal status, but in substance it is the same. Therefore, the SNP is simply being consistent by supporting a referendum on this Treaty. We are not afraid of a public debate on Europe. On the contrary, forging a new relationship between Scotland and the EU is central to our vision. I want to see Scotland joining the family of European nations and playing a constructive part in decision-making as a Member State, not as an observer from the sidelines.

**Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann (GUE/NGL).** – (DE) Mr President, I am pro Europe, and therefore, as a Member of the left, I support the Treaty of Lisbon. I do not agree, however, with the increased emphasis on military aspects. Today I would like to remind Parliament that the deepening of European integration achieved with the Treaty was hotly debated with the 'eurosceptic' and particularly the nationalistic positions. That which

has been achieved must now be defended, and I hope that the comprehensive reform of the European Union can now enter into force.

The Treaty of Lisbon retains many improvements from the former constitution. In particular, it directs the European Union to become essentially more democratic and closer to its citizens. The Union can also become more socially oriented. In my opinion, the neoliberal cement of the Maastricht Treaty has finally been broken up with the embedding of Treaty conditions such as the goal of full employment, with the basic principle of a sustainable social market economy, with the horizontal social clause, according to which all legal acts will, in future, have to be checked to ensure that social objectives are taken into account, and with the new Protocol on services of general interest.

The Treaty of Lisbon offers the opportunity to extend the Economic and Monetary Union by adding a social union. That is why the neoliberal *Zeitgeist* in Europe must be driven further back. Its protagonists must not succeed in turning the EU into a free trade zone without social accountability. The rush to reduce taxes and wage dumping, with its dire social consequences, must be brought to an end and a minimum wage must be introduced in all Member States.

**Jens-Peter Bonde (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, I am still offering a bottle of very good wine to any person who can give me just one example of a law which can be adopted with the Constitution and not with the Lisbon Treaty. In my view, the legal obligations are identical. The difference is in presentation only. Sarkozy's mini-treaty will now be around 3 000 pages instead of the 560 pages in the rejected Constitution.

The majority has the right to endorse the Treaty, but you have no right to refuse normal parliamentary scrutiny of this Lisbon Treaty. I have asked more than 700 serious questions on the interpretation of the different articles. You do not know the answers. You cannot explain why the Danish translation has forgotten the new 'additional citizenship' or the abolition of the right of national governments to propose their own Commissioners.

Most of you have not read, and cannot read, the Treaty, because you have still not received the full content of the deliberations of the Intergovernmental Conference in a consolidated version. You approve secrecy instead of transparency. You approve a reduction in parliamentary democracy instead of insisting on this Parliament's right to represent our voters, scrutinise on behalf of our voters and question the executive on behalf of the half a million citizens we represent.

**Andreas Mølzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, again and again we are told that this Treaty of Lisbon will make Europe functional. We are told that this Treaty will operate vigorously. As someone who is very critical of this Treaty, I can only hope, for the sake of our children and our children's' children, that this is true, as if it is not the case, if this Treaty takes us down a blind alley, then God help us.

One thing is certain, and that is that this Treaty, which the EU establishment is now pushing through at any price, is ill-fated for the simple reason that it despises everything that it is possible to despise about democratic politics. The national parliaments will, of course, be marginalised. The plebiscites in France and the Netherlands were, of course, quietly turned on their heads again, as it were. Most likely, if Ireland votes against this Treaty, ways and means will also be found to discount that vote. I am against this Treaty, because I am pro Europe!

**Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, this report, in endorsing the Lisbon Treaty, clearly states that this is a substantial improvement on the existing Treaties, argues that it is desirable that the Treaty of Lisbon be ratified by all Member States by the end of the current year, and claims that it will provide a stable framework, allowing further development of the Union in future.

I have to say that, as a British Conservative, I sadly cannot agree with all that, but I do so in a friendly way and not from an extreme or nihilist stance, as others seem to argue from. From the start, I have made it clear that this Treaty or Constitution is not the best way forward for Europe at this time. Conservatives support a Europe of independent states working closely together to meet the challenges of globalisation, global poverty and global warming, as has already been stated by others. These are the priorities, and it must be done in a cooperative fashion. Indeed my colleague, the UK Shadow Foreign Secretary, William Hague, said in a debate in London: 'Conservatives are the strongest advocates of a European Union where nations work together in a way that strengthens our economies, empowers our consumers and turns our common values into effective action on the great issues facing our world today.'

I do not believe that what we have before us will help us particularly in that great challenge. Our eloquent rapporteurs who quote Shakespeare in their advocacy of haste, should, I think, also note King John, Act V,

Scene II, where a supplicant said, 'According to the fair play of the world, let me have audience'. Well, perhaps, in the UK, the Prime Minister should note that, and he should then allow his citizens to have their say on this undoubtedly vital matter.

**Magda Kósáné Kovács (PSE).** – (HU) Thank you, Mr President. The report by Richard Corbett and Íñigo Méndez de Vigo is an excellent analysis and in the long term it will become a source document. It deserves recognition and gratitude.

Hungary was the first country to ratify the Reform Treaty. It is significant that in the exceptionally fragmented and often contradictory Hungarian political arena a sweeping majority voted in favour of ratification. There was unanimity on the need for the Reform Treaty in the interests of ending the hiatus that had developed between old and new Member States following accession; there was also unanimity on the need to strengthen unity within the European Union and to enhance the effectiveness of its institutions and its actions.

For us, however, Lisbon is not merely a treaty that provides an answer to the questions raised by enlargement. For us, the provisions that reinforce democracy within this complicated network of interests are particularly important, such as those that extend Parliament's legislative powers and powers of scrutiny, or the changes to Council decision-making procedures. We are convinced that the smaller, less experienced, poorer and historically disadvantaged countries will benefit from this.

With a simpler decision-making structure we can expect interests to be clearly revealed, and political bargaining processes to be rendered more transparent. Our future lies in cooperation, and the results and benefits of this must be felt by the citizens of Europe too. They must also be felt by those who, for whatever reason, have found themselves reduced to a minority, those whom history and wars have made a minority. Lisbon provides them with a new opportunity and an instrument to combat the menace of nationalism.

The Lisbon Treaty forms a symbolic arch with the Lisbon Strategy since the Charter of Fundamental Rights includes social rights among the fundamental human rights. We are certain that this will also bring the citizens of the European Union closer together. Thank you, Mr President.

**Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE).** – (FI) Mr President, it is important to have increasing levels of cooperation at European level. Hopefully, we will have new treaties, so that the debate can move on to core issues.

I want to mention three things. Firstly, the legislative power of the European Parliament will increase dramatically if the new treaty enters into force. There will be 40 new fields of policy activity. This means that the workload of the Members of our Parliament will grow considerably. It will mean that Parliament's work will have to be reorganised so that we can operate effectively, democratically and openly. In future Parliament will no longer be a debating society but a highly important legislative body, influencing the lives of Europeans. That will require an accountable Parliament; it will mean that Members of Parliament will have to be prepared to familiarise themselves with a whole range of issues and not just listen to just one or two lobbies, for example.

Next, I want to talk about foreign policy. It is now high time we thought about the powers and jurisdiction of the new President, the High Representative and the President of the Commission in foreign policy matters. Otherwise there will be problems. Otherwise, in the outside world they will not know who to contact. We all know that backstage there is a fierce argument going on about these power relationships, but this could be an open debate. Furthermore, this debate on the powers of different actors is, I think, a lot more important than the discussion over personnel. It is really important.

Finally, I want to say something else about foreign policy. It remains intergovernmental in the nature of course, but we want the EU to be able to speak with one united voice; and this will definitely require a real change of attitude on the part of the Member States. The EU's Committee on Climate Change just visited India and we learned that there people hardly know anything about the EU and it has barely any significance for Indians. What does have significance for them is when President Sarkozy or Prime Minister Brown pays a visit. Moreover, when EU foreign ministers visit external countries, their agenda is completely national. If the EU is mentioned it may be some small aside, but nothing much more than that. If this continues we will definitely have a long time to wait until the EU becomes a strong foreign policy actor.

**Roberts Zile (UEN).** – (LV) Thank you, Mr President. Perhaps for those who wished to see the Constitutional Treaty ratified, the Lisbon Treaty is not a great achievement, but undoubtedly neither is it an achievement for the eurosceptics, who did not wish to see any new EU treaties. This means that it is a classic political compromise, and as such it ought also to be ratified in all EU Member States. Certainly, the European

Parliament has increased areas of responsibility under the Lisbon Treaty, and this imposes new duties upon us. As a whole, too, Europe's institutions must demonstrate to European citizens that in economically sensitive areas they are able to show genuine European solidarity, so that we do not end up with a new energy solidarity stipulation, just like the introduction of the free market principle in European territory with the Services Directive. Since a lot depends on us, I very much hope that the representatives of all the Member States both in Parliament and in the other European institutions will understand how vital this demonstration is for European citizens. Thank you.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

*Vice-President*

**Esko Seppänen (GUE/NGL).** – (FI) Mr President, Commissioner, the Hungarian Parliament ratified the Treaty of Lisbon before it had officially been sent it. It thus did not know what it was agreeing with. On this issue, in which the European Parliament has no legal competence, we are being made a laughing-stock, as we do not have any consolidated version of the treaty as a basis for debate. Without that, the treaty is just as impossible for us to read as it is for the citizens of the EU.

Our Group does not accept the treaty. The EU will be militarised and will move towards becoming a military alliance. It will not further the interests of a socialist Europe nor will it promote any ideal form of democracy. Under the treaty, the Member States will be committed to increasing military resources for operations outside their territory and in their previous colonies.

The EU's military operations will be able to be executed without a UN mandate, i.e. illegally from the point of view of international law. There was no article on a compulsory UN mandate when the European Convention met. It was blocked by the EU NATO countries, for which it is not an alien concept to engage in illegal wars, like that in Iraq. The EU also uses NATO-compliant combat troops to enforce the peace, that is to say, wars, in other countries. The same weapons are also used by the NATO Response Force. The Treaty of Lisbon is fully NATO-compliant, and will help the EU to wear the NATO hat.

What is meant by the EU's own collective and military safeguards is vague. When the Member States commit all the resources available to them to helping other Member States, all these resources available to them might also be military. If that happens, and they are deployed, the EU then also becomes a military alliance.

**Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, I object to a report on the Lisbon Treaty being rushed through this House before Members are given the Treaty in a readable, contextual form.

We have been sent amendments that, in that form, are nonsense. Would we vote on other reports in this House based on amendments, without having seen the document? Should we take this report on faith? As legislators, this is not what our constituents have sent us to Strasbourg to do.

I come from Ireland. We are having a referendum. As news of this spreads, I am receiving requests for the Treaty every day. When I have to tell people there is no readable version, they are incredulous. But when I tell them that this is by decree of the Intergovernmental Conference, they are angry.

I have no doubt this feeling is even more intense for other frustrated peoples of Europe, who are denied a referendum. But I can only imagine how people will react when they hear that their MEPs passed this report on a Treaty that they have not read.

I will let you in on a secret. Our citizens are intelligent, thoughtful and well capable of playing their democratic role in their own governance. And what we are doing here today, and throughout this Lisbon process, is a betrayal of our citizens, the very citizens whose cooperation and hard work we will need to further the European project.

I warn you: do not be surprised if, some day, these same long-suffering citizens refuse that cooperation.

**Ashley Mote (NI).** – Mr President, I would question why, if the Lisbon Treaty is such a good thing, it is so inaccessible. Is it because Member States are turned from the theoretical masters of the EU into its servants? Is it because it makes law, rather than a framework for law-making? Is it because it offers no checks and balances to control future law-makers? Is it because it consolidates power in a self-perpetuating bureaucracy?

Like the last Treaty, this one gives the EU a permanent right to seize more powers without any future agreements – an outrageous power grab. Such undemocratic powers are illegal in the United Kingdom,

because no British Parliament can bind its successors. Mrs Wallström said the word 'constitution' was being dropped to avoid trouble with the Brits – too right! We should leave, taking our EUR 2 million an hour with us, and we would all be better off.

**Elmar Brok (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, Madam Vice-President, President-in-Office of the Council, I can no longer understand the speeches by the representatives of the United Kingdom Independence Party and other parties. I was taught that the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy delivered full democratic legitimisation. That is what is happening here. We have been elected by the voters and will make a decision, just as our colleagues in the national parliaments do, and we have full democratic authority to do so. What is going on here, in a populist manner, is the destruction of the authority of parliamentary democracy, and you will have to take responsibility for this.

(Applause)

The second point that I would like to mention here, and for this I thank Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo, is that it is clear that this Treaty closes a democratic loophole in the European Union. Full codecision rights for the European Parliament, the election of the Commission President by the European Parliament, the obligation for international treaties to be ratified by the European Parliament, the strengthening of the national parliaments – I do not want to go into detail. What we are doing here in the European Union is unique, as we no longer resolve the different interests of our peoples and among our peoples, which will always be present, with tanks and guns, as used to happen, but with debates and democratic voting.

That is the real, magnificent difference compared with what has constituted European history thus far, and all this on the basis of equality of the States and people groups. We should take our bearings from this. It has been the good fortune of Western Europe for 60 years, and since European reunification in 1990, large areas of Europe have shared in this good fortune. Now we want to strengthen this, so that this internal peace process will give us a better ability to make decisions through the Treaty, and so that we can meet the challenges of the future in this world and can overcome the problems of energy security, external security policy, terrorism and many others. This is the answer to these challenges. Mr Méndez de Vigo quoted Paul Valéry, and I would like to quote him again: 'Europe will either unite or be the appendix of the Asian continent.' That is the point. Does Europe have a chance of survival, by working together, by combining forces and giving them democratic authority and guidance, or will we as Europeans disappear in the global order?

(Applause)

**Enrique Barón Crespo (PSE).** – (ES) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Vice-President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome the report by my colleagues Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo, because it is a report that is consistent with what the European Parliament has done from the start.

I am sure that presidents such as Robert Schuman and Paul-Henri Spaak, or Konrad Adenauer would have signed the Lisbon Treaty, above all because the line that was defined based on the Spinelli Treaty, which in the mid-1980s inspired the line that took shape in the Constitution, has now resulted in the Lisbon Treaty, in an open constitutional process for the European Union. In this respect, I think that the report defends and sets out the progress that has been made. At the same time, however, it is a report that forms part of the desire to consolidate the European Union as a political and democratic union.

I would like to make an observation regarding the lessons that we need to learn and, in particular, on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty. I am hearing a great deal of talk about referendums from those who are against us moving forward. I of course participated in the referendum that we organised in my country and we won. There is a lesson we need to learn: what we decide together cannot be made subject to, cannot be held hostage by, what is decided by a small minority.

We need to think as democrats about how all of us together ratify what we desire. It is not acceptable for us all to be dependent on what a small minority may do, and I think that this is an important lesson for the future.

Mr President, I would like to finish with an observation: the European Parliament has always been in the vanguard, at the forefront of Europe. This means that we now need to get to work on a large number of political decisions that need to be adopted even before the next elections, because the reality is that this Treaty



should enter into force on 1 January 2009. From the point of view of democracy, codecision, appointments and adapting the European Parliament, there is a great deal still to be done.

*(Applause)*

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Mr President, as one of only 13 Members of this House who will have the opportunity to vote on a referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon, I am satisfied to give it my support. Like any document, it is not perfect, as Commissioner Wallström has said. It is a compromise, but it is going in the right direction.

Because of time constraints, I will keep my comments to just one topic. The Treaty maintains the principle of subsidiarity – the principle that we take decisions at the most appropriate level.

In Ireland one of the arguments used by supporters of a ‘no’ vote is to suggest that Lisbon is a self-amending Treaty, yet Article 48(4) states quite clearly that any amendments to the Treaty will enter into force only after being ratified by all Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. That is the very essence of subsidiarity.

What surprises me about the debate in this House at times – even though I suppose I should not be surprised – is that those who shout longest and loudest about the sovereignty of Member States are the very ones to attempt to undermine that sovereignty by lecturing and hectoring Member States about the need to hold a referendum, when national legislation and, therefore, sovereignty and subsidiarity, dictate otherwise. Lisbon upholds the sovereign right of Member States to make such decisions, and that is just one of the very many reasons why I support it.

**Konrad Szymański (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, the Lisbon Treaty was a very difficult compromise for all parties involved, so I am amazed to read words in this report that are nothing less than preparation of the ground for campaigns aimed at constitutionalising the EU.

I would rather propose that we come to terms with an absence of symbolic attributes, with compromises on the Council voting system, or with opt-in/opt-out agreements. I would also propose coming to terms with the fact that the convention method has brought the EU problems; problems that we have overcome through traditional negotiations between governments.

The EU does not need a permanent discussion of institutions; it needs political will and the implementation of common and useful aims.

**Irena Belohorská (NI).** – *(SK)* Ladies and gentlemen, it is good to see that the European Parliament is actively monitoring and taking the initiative in the process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. I am pleased that I had the opportunity to be part of the European Convention and to work for 18 months on the drafting of the Constitutional Treaty, despite the fact that it was unsuccessful. The Lisbon Treaty that has followed on from it represents a political compromise and it is a balanced and good document.

In addition to other important reforms, this document also broadens the scope of codecision: for us in the European Parliament that means that this House will be more powerful than ever before, since it was first established. I welcome this fact as proof of the modernisation and democratisation of politics in 21st century Europe. At the same time the document offers more flexibility for the European Union, which currently consists of 27 Member States. Accordingly, we can see an increased participation of national parliaments in the preparation of documents in the European Union. In this context, I must express my regret over the situation in Slovakia: there were no problems with the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty but the present ratification has become somewhat problematic as a result of political game-playing. That said, I trust that the Slovak politicians, too, will realise how necessary this document is and that the ratification will take place without a hitch.

Allow me to add one more sentence. The debates in this House, Mr President, highlight the difference in terms of how the European Council and the European Parliament are perceived. They show that communication in this area is probably not very good: in fact, the signatures of the prime ministers who signed the Lisbon Treaty are being questioned. That is a rather serious matter.

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, before my customary three points, I want to take issue with what Nigel Farage of the UKIP talked about. He mentioned the word ‘chicken’. We might, perhaps, expect that something will be going on during the vote and I would like to say that you are what you wear during the vote. We will see what UKIP looks like.

I have three points. My first point is that, in the European Union, we are in a constant process of change. We stood here and dealt with a similar report two years ago, and I would really like to congratulate the rapporteurs, Richard Corbett and Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, on a job well done. What happened in 2005 was unfortunate. What we have done since is crisis management. This is really what Europe is all about. We need to solve problems; we solved a treaty problem and, hopefully, we can get on now.

My second point is that I think the Treaty that we have in front of us is a great improvement on the Nice Treaty. It is an improvement in terms of efficiency: we get more qualified majority voting, we get a legal personality, we get a great deal more on external relations and good stuff on justice and home affairs. It is also an improvement of democracy. The European Parliament increases its powers, the Charter of Fundamental Rights comes into the Treaty and the national parliaments get more powers. So, in many ways, it is a great improvement on the Nice Treaty.

My third and final point, however, is that now it is time to move on. I congratulate those five countries that have already ratified the Treaty. The sooner we can push this Treaty through, the better off all of us will be, because it is time to move on, focus on real business, on legislation, on taking smart European decisions. When we do that, however, we must not forget that we have a vision. That vision is of a unified Europe, because the European Union is the only organisation that has given us four things. Those four things are peace, prosperity, stability and security.

**Bernard Poignant (PSE).** – (FR) Mr President, treaties are like births: some need an epidural, others a caesarean. This one falls into the second category and it will grow up as a beautiful baby, you will see.

We had to have two attempts at it, but that is in the past. It is imperfect, it is incomplete, but it is better than nothing. Most of all, it brings to a close the reunification of the continent, which began on 9 November 1989. In its way, it also brings the Second World War to a close. Of course, it is being accused of firmly establishing a liberal Europe. It could have been totalitarian, no less! I hope that this Treaty does not mark the end of one period, but the start of another.

I am already looking forward to finding out who will be the President of Europe, because the whole world will be watching to see who is chosen, and the person will create the institution. Already I want to say to that person: 'Do not stay in your office. Go all over Europe, not just to the capital cities but to every region of Europe.' I would like to say to him or her: 'Go all over the world. Go to the places where freedoms are ignored, human rights are restricted, and there is still war and conflict. Show that Europe has a name, a face, an address, a telephone number.' I think this person, whether a man or a woman, will have a decisive role. We will see what will be done with this post.

There will already be a rendez-vous in June 2014 – five years on. Either the Treaty will have been a good experience, will have proved effective, and citizens will have appropriated it, or the taste for Europe itself will have been damaged. That is why the forthcoming parliamentary term will probably be a decisive one as far as the commitment of citizens to Europe is concerned.

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE).** – (RO) Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I would like to congratulate the Rapporteurs. Indeed, this is a very good report.

In spite of giving up the Union's symbols and in spite of all the compromises made at the European Council of June and at the intergovernmental conference, the Reform Treaty of Lisbon preserves the most important innovations from the former constitutional treaty and is truly a great step forward in reforming the European Union. I am mostly glad about the increase in the European Parliament's and the national parliaments' role in making decisions in the European Union.

My country, Romania, was one of the first countries to ratify the treaty with a very big majority of votes from the Members of the Parliament. In my opinion, conclusion number 10 is maybe the most important conclusion of the report. Even if the ratification of the treaty will be made in national parliaments in almost all the Member States, with one exception, I believe it is essential to inform the citizens of the European Union countries in order to have successful institutional reforms.

It is the duty of the European institutions to inform the citizens about this treaty. It is our duty, that of each Member of the European Parliament, to go to our countries and explain to the citizens we represent here the advantages of the Lisbon Treaty for the future of the European construction.

**Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, after two years of discussion on the controversial treaty that was rejected in France and Holland, we have succeeded in reaching a compromise and accepting

a text that is supposed to save the peoples of Europe. There is just one problem: everyone has agreed, and some have actually already accepted a text that does not yet exist in a consolidated version. The rapporteurs actually acknowledge this in paragraph 9 of the document tabled before Parliament.

The Lisbon Treaty has been made available only as a list of amendments to the treaties. Even Members of this Parliament have not seen a consolidated text, let alone citizens of the Member States. Is this how it is meant to look, the proclaimed rapprochement between the EU and its citizens – those citizens who are being denied not only the right to a referendum, but also the potential to familiarise themselves with the text, not to mention any debate on it? Was this brought about only through technical considerations, or is it that the authors of this work of genius are once again trying to hide something?

The history of ratification of the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties shows that the leaders of the EU are contemptuous of the peoples of Europe and democratic procedures. This is why this report must be rejected.

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, the Eurobarometer always shows that around 30% of European citizens are eurosceptic and are unhappy. This 30% is very interesting. It appeals particularly to protest groups and others that have no policies of their own but want a share of that 30%. It appeals to those who have no policies by which they can be identified; euroscepticism is a screen to hide behind. This 30% also appeals to those whose policies will never be accepted by others.

Euroscepticism is a very useful disguise for xenophobes. It is considered acceptable to be seen to be sceptical, at least in the eyes of this 30%. It is against this background, therefore, that we should consider the call for referendums. Those involved are not actually concerned about referendums; they are not trying to achieve more democracy; rather, all they are after is to harness this 30% of protest potential and use it to drive their own goals.

The same 30% of eurosceptics attracts interest from another quarter, however. They represent market potential for certain media. EU protest sells well – we see that every day in the tabloids. In my country, Austria, you need only to glance at the headlines to know what it is all about. It is not about supposed high treason, and it is not about the EU ‘theatre’. It is about making sure that this 30% will continue to buy the paper each day.

Who could be against a national referendum? Nobody could be against a national referendum, but then they ought to be called for much more frequently and on a much wider range of topics – yet this does not happen. Basically, the protest serves only the newspaper’s own potential market share, its potential to dominate; it does not serve democracy. This is indeed something that should be stated on a day like today.

(Applause)

**Genowefa Grabowska (PSE).** – (PL) Mr President, I would like to congratulate my colleagues on an excellent report, and I wish to convey to you today three pieces of news: two are excellent, and one is bad. The first piece of good news is as follows: Poland is ratifying the Lisbon Treaty. Yesterday the Polish Government passed a draft law on its ratification, and on 27 February the Polish *Sejm* and Senate will be considering it. I would like to emphasise that the Treaty has the support of the vast majority in Parliament.

The second piece of good news is that the Polish people are exceptionally strong in their support of the European project. According to recent studies, as many as 83% of Poles are satisfied with membership of the EU. Given such widespread support, a referendum in my country would be irrelevant. Please remember that my fellow Members who are calling here in this House for a referendum are speaking only for themselves.

The third piece of news, which is bad, is that Poland unfortunately still has reservations about the Charter of Fundamental Rights, so apart from the British, the Poles will be the only Europeans not to enjoy its benefits. I therefore appeal to the Council and to the Slovenian Presidency to prepare a mechanism for a simplified opt-in that would enable Poland, and in future perhaps Great Britain, too, to sign up to the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

**Roger Helmer (NI).** – Mr President, can I first of all respond to our good colleague Mr Barón Crespo, who said that we could not allow the will of a small minority to stand in the way of the European project.

In my country, opinion polls show that some 75% of the British people want a referendum and two thirds of them would vote ‘no’. If that is what Mr Barón Crespo thinks is a small minority, all I can say is that it is not my view of a small minority.

As a number of colleagues have pointed out, we are actually voting on something that we cannot read. We have no consolidated text. It is an absolute scandal!

Many people on the other side of the House are telling us that this is a good thing. I have heard again and again what a good thing it is. If it is so good, then why not go out in the streets and argue it in front of the people in a referendum? Why are you running scared?

Today, the European project is abandoning any claim to democratic legitimacy. Today, we will vote through the renamed Constitution in an act that shows monstrous contempt for European citizens and democratic values. In 2005, the voters of France and Holland decisively rejected the constitution.

I am astonished by the bare-faced effrontery of European leaders, who have changed the packaging but are now bringing back the substance in defiance of public opinion. Most French and Dutch MEPs will support this report. I do not know how they will face their voters. I do not know how they will sleep at night.

In the UK, the Labour Government has broken its solemn promise of a referendum, yet in postal polls conducted by campaign groups, more than 80% of voters vote 'yes' to a referendum.

By forcing this measure through in the teeth of public opposition, you are hacking at the very foundations of the Europe you are seeking to build. We must listen to the people. They demand a referendum.

**Jens-Peter Bonde (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, Mr Corbett has now shown us a so-called 'consolidated' version of the Treaty 10 times. That version has not been consolidated in such a way as to enable a decision, because it shows the text as it would appear if we had already approved the Lisbon Treaty. A consolidated version is an edition in which text to be introduced is shown in bold type and text that will disappear is shown in italics, enabling it to be considered in a proper way.

Commissioner Wallström promised us such a version ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Rihards Pīks (PPE-DE).** – (LV) Mr President, Vice-President of the Commission, President-in-Office of the Council, while listening to a few of my fellow Members today, I realised the old truth written in the scriptures: to criticise, to belittle, is easy, but to build a house, to create a temple, is a long and difficult task. I must remind critics of this Treaty that its basis – the Lisbon Treaty, the Constitutional Treaty – was created in the most widely represented democratic forum in European history, with participation by non-governmental organisations, and in the presence of the mass media. Therefore I would like, today, to congratulate my colleagues Mr Méndez de Vigo and Mr Corbett, who have drafted the report on which we are now going to vote. This report is in fact a very good summary, a very good summary, and Mr Bonde is right in saying that the consolidated version is currently available only in English. I would therefore suggest that the document be published as a brochure, as a very good summary, since not everyone will read the full Treaty. Touching now upon the actual positions taken by the Treaty, there was talk about many good things, and there was also criticism. It seems to me to be very good that a common foreign and security policy has been formulated, as well as the need for a common energy policy. At the same time it is a shame that there are no new instruments for carrying out these policies – neither the Commission nor Parliament have been given such instruments. What does this mean? It means that the work is still before us: to introduce these policies and to implement them. Therefore, in fact, half the work has already been done: the foundation has been developed, but the rest of the work, the second half, namely putting it into practice, still remains for us to do. I wish us all luck. Thank you.

**Adrian Severin (PSE).** – Mr President, the merits of the Lisbon Treaty have been mentioned and the progress it brings towards a real Union of citizens was described. The need for its urgent ratification was also stressed. Let me add to this two notes of concern.

First, the market is globalised, organised crime is globalised, poverty is globalised and the waves of immigrants remind us of this reality every day. While car, computer, aircraft and steel companies merge, new or renewed global powers emerge. In spite of that, Europe remains divided. The ongoing division on Kosovo, which is portrayed by some as a battle between legalist and realist, is the most recent and frightening example, proving that peace and law in Europe are not yet secure.

Against this background, the obsession for opt-out or opt-in arrangements is not a way to protect national sovereignty against so-called European imperialism but a way to condemn each of our Member States to parochialist irrelevance and, ultimately, insecurity.

My second concern: one has deleted from the Treaty references to symbols, fearing that the European symbols could overshadow national ones. On the other hand, the lack of democratic participation of citizens in national life proves every day that our national myths are in a state of fatigue. The European Coal and Steel Community was able to mobilise citizens not only by addressing their minds, but also by inspiring their hearts. It was a plan associated with a myth.

The Lisbon Treaty is another excellent plan, but it lacks soul. This will not only weaken the capacity of the European Union to inspire citizens but also the capacity of each Member State to rehabilitate their national myths.

For the rest, I fully share the ideas of the report and I commend the rapporteurs for their excellent work. I share all their views and I think they did a great job. I hope, however, that one day we all will be able to shout, '*Habemus tractatum rei publicae Europae.*'

**Jean-Luc Dehaene (PPE-DE).** – (NL) Mr President, as the fathers of European integration always put it, this integration is realised step by step. Sometimes the steps are small, and sometimes they are large. The rapporteurs have underlined very clearly that the Treaty of Lisbon is an important qualitative step forward – one could even say a quantum leap – for Europe. It is comparable to the Treaty of Rome, when we created the common market, to the Single European Act with the single market, and to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) with monetary union. The TEU also represented a modest preliminary step towards political union.

By endowing the Union with legal personality and abolishing the pillars, the Treaty of Lisbon gives Europe a definite political dimension. Europe needs the Treaty in order to be a global actor in today's globalised world and thus to set the standards this globalised world needs. In addition, the general application of codecision makes decision making in this political union more democratic. This Treaty now needs to be ratified and, in this regard, a coordinated text should indeed help achieve a better understanding of the progress made.

Having a text is one thing, however, but ratification is another, and implementation another thing again: this may be the most important of the tasks now facing us. I was delighted to hear that the Presidency and the Commission, too, are starting to think about and work on this implementation, as various directions are possible, and we could even take the wrong one if we are not careful. That is why it is also very important for Parliament to concern itself with this implementation, too, in order to set a clear course for the way in which the Treaty should represent real progress. It is possible for implementation to steer the Treaty in a different direction and we certainly do not want that. We want the progress that is contained in the Treaty.

**Edite Estrela (PSE).** – (PT) I congratulate the rapporteurs Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo on their excellent work and the good example of cooperation. The Portuguese Presidency had the historic mission of turning a mandate into a Treaty, the Treaty of Lisbon, which is to be ratified by the Portuguese Parliament next April. The new Treaty is not the remedy for all the European Union's ills, but it represents added value for democracy. The powers of the European Parliament are enhanced, as are the powers of the national parliaments, but participatory democracy is also enhanced – specifically by means of the citizens' initiative which enables one million citizens to ask the Commission to launch a legislative initiative in a specific field; in addition the Charter of Fundamental Rights is now legally binding.

The European Union is not perfect, but it is irreplaceable in its world role. We need a Europe which is more involved and influential in solving world problems, such as climate change, food security, energy policy, international terrorism, organised crime, immigration, etc. There is now an urgent need for each of the 27 Member States which signed the Treaty of Lisbon on 13 December 2007 to proceed to ratify the Treaty. That is a decisive stage in our achieving a Europe which is more efficient in decision-making, closer to citizens, better able to respond to the challenges of globalisation and more effective in external relations. Let each and every one of us assume our responsibilities because the world does not stop.

Whilst Europe was spinning out its pause for reflection and wasting energy looking for a way out of its institutional problems, the emerging economies were continuing to grow, armed conflicts were spreading, climate change was becoming obvious, energy problems were becoming more acute and many people were dying for lack of food and medical assistance. Notwithstanding ultranationalist opinions and euroscepticism, Europe cannot stop – and it is not going to stop.

**Georgios Papastamkos (PPE-DE).** – (EL) As shadow draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on International Trade and as a member of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, I should like to say by way

of introduction that the Lisbon Treaty signals the transition from a constitutional 'elitism' to the reform of the European unification project. Joint European progress is ensured through constitutional duality, namely the two revised Treaties of equal legal value.

At the same time, however, a multi-speed Europe is emerging. In other words, the Union is gaining in flexibility, but it is losing a common unification impetus. The Member State once again has the upper hand in the dialectic relationship between supra-national and national elements. The parliamentary system is also emerging from the recent European compromise strengthened, with the roles of both the European Parliament and the national parliaments having been reinforced.

Ladies and gentlemen, the European unification process undoubtedly needs a boost. Citizens are looking for answers to politically dynamic challenges. They are interested in the quality and productivity of political output. They democratically legitimise, whether directly or indirectly, the EU's decision-making bodies and expect successful action. A successful conclusion to the ratification attempt, and, above all, the lasting democratic legitimisation of projects carried out in full view of European citizens, depend on the initiation of a detailed political debate with the EU on the key political, economic and social approaches, on the relationship of European citizens to the EU, and on the position of the EU in the world.

In this context, the establishment of a lasting, transparent and democratic dialogue with civil society cannot be a mere pretext. It must reflect an in-depth politicisation of the unification enterprise. The European Parliament is playing a key role in this politicisation. I congratulate my fellow Members Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo on their fruitful and creative contribution.

**Proinsias De Rossa (PSE).** – Mr President, this Treaty is not an elegant document. There are many 'ifs', 'buts' and 'maybes', because there is no other way for a diverse family of nations to share power. However, despite the naysayers, it responds to our citizens' demands for more democracy and a greater capacity to do those things which nation states cannot do effectively on their own: peacekeeping, climate change, migration, financial and market regulation, and, indeed, labour regulation.

At this time of global instability, the European Union is more important than ever for small Member States like Ireland. Today's vote will again show up the bizarre alliance of market fundamentalists, ultra-left and ultra-right, which opposes this Treaty. They have one thing in common: an urge to confine peoples' democratic reach behind national borders. The multimillionaires – the Murdochs in Britain and the Ganleys in Ireland – cynically manipulate national chauvinism to seek to deny Europeans reaching beyond their national borders to regulate business in the wider interests of society.

The others, Sinn Féin and their allies, do not trust the citizens and their ability to create an accountable transnational democracy. Their stock-in-trade is fear, fear of our neighbours, of democratic parliaments, of governments and of globalisation. They fail to explain how more power for parliaments means less democracy. They masquerade as internationalists but they object to neighbours helping each other in times of crisis or attack. They refuse to countenance binding European laws to protect us and our neighbours from climate change, the abuse of workers' rights and abuse of the market.

The weapons of those who pedal fear is the big lie, eloquently demonstrated here today by Ms McDonald and Ms Sinnott. They wearily turn truth on its head to claim that elected representatives of more than 80% of the people of Europe are about to crush democracy, are about to deny people ever again having a say in the construction of Europe. Before polling day in Ireland, all these big lies will have been shown up for what they are: the nightmares of parties which have learned nothing from their history and are bent on condemning the people of Europe to repeating it. I am confident that Ireland's decision will be to stay at the heart of Europe.

**Avril Doyle (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, Ireland has chosen to ratify the Lisbon Treaty by referendum because, on balance, this was deemed necessary under the terms of our written Constitution, but I fully respect the decision of all other Member States in their choice of ratification process.

A few points bear constant repetition. The Lisbon Treaty does differ from its forerunner, the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty, in that it no longer consists of a single consolidated text. It merely amends existing Treaties – on the European Union, and establishing the European Communities – Treaties which, in their own right, have been ratified fully. In addition, the constitutional title and symbolism, and the reference to the EU flag and anthem, have been dropped.

More Europe means more of that to which Europe brings added value to our citizens because, by clearly defining the limits of the Union's competences, the Reform Treaty or the Lisbon Treaty, gives both the European Union and national parliaments clear definition as to where their competences belong, and confers, incidentally, more subsidiarity on Member States, a point often lost.

The Reform Treaty allows for greater continuity in EU decision-making, notably in the foreign policy domain, by creating the new post of President of the European Council, who will be appointed for a two-and-a-half-year term, renewable on one occasion. A High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy would be appointed, who would not just be based in the Council but would also be a Vice-President of the Commission. These developments will not, however, lead to replacement of national foreign policies. Moreover, the existing rotating six-month presidency will continue as before, a fact often overlooked or misunderstood.

Unlike certain other EU Treaties, this Lisbon Treaty does not create major new chapters of EU competence. There would, however, be new legal bases for patents, tourism, sports, space and administrative cooperation, a reinforced legal basis on energy policy and, most importantly, an explicit new reference to fighting climate change with existing legal bases on environmental policy.

For all these reasons, my colleagues in Fine Gael and I will be supporting our Government. All the Irish parties, with the exception of Sinn Féin, will be supporting the Government and working hard to ratify this Treaty and to get the message across. Sinn Féin will not, because they are afraid of 'greater militarisation of Europe' – ironic given that party's particular history!

Colleagues, while your goodwill and support is most welcome, a gentle word of warning – please do not be tempted, in your eagerness for a positive outcome of our referendum, to tell the Irish electorate how to vote. And, Commission, please stop picking rows with Ireland on administrative and other issues such as the REPS, which can be misrepresented, deliberately or otherwise, by the Treaty naysayers.

**Mauro Zani (PSE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Treaty of Lisbon brings to an end a prolonged and perilous deadlock. We are emerging from the crisis with a stable and more effective institutional structure that is open to further developments. We are entering a new phase in which – I hope – the way can also be reopened towards a Constitution for Europe.

To this end, however, a special effort is needed to promote European citizenship, based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It is not demographic calculations, which suit a national, intergovernmental logic, but European citizenship that is the cornerstone on which the political edifice of Europe will be built in the future. This is also the only way of giving this Treaty soul, the soul that Mr Severin was talking about earlier.

The future is therefore, first and foremost, in the hands of a great alliance between Parliament and European citizens in the fullness of their rights and duties. Perhaps the first test of this alliance is the choice for the new post of President of the EU.

**Jacek Protasiewicz (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Mr President, allow me, if you would, to begin by congratulating the authors of this report, since through their work a text has come about that is not just a political document, but an astute guide to the new realities of the Treaty. One could almost say that it is a didactic aid for students throughout the European Union and beyond.

In drawing up their report, Mr Méndez de Vigo and Mr Corbett have highlighted the positive changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, but have also acknowledged the fears brought about by difficult intergovernmental negotiations. At that time, Poland was seen as one of the states that was holding back progress in European integration. Much has changed, however, since the recent elections. The new government is more open to European cooperation and understands that a strong EU is in the interests of our country, Poland.

It should, however, be borne in mind that a section of the Polish population shares some of the fears linked to the superior standing of EU law in the hierarchy of regulations of civil law, and especially of family and property law. We need time and more experience of collaboration in the European Community for these fears to diminish, and perhaps to be extinguished. My country's government has therefore refrained from signing the Charter of Fundamental Rights, particularly as there was a serious risk that the ratification process in Poland would effectively be blocked if a different decision were to be taken.

I am very pleased that the authors of the report have appreciated these circumstances and decided to remove from the primary text the names of states whose stance might be viewed critically by the European Parliament. The Lisbon Treaty is the result of a compromise between dreams of a European federation and fears that are

currently prevalent not only among citizens of the new states, but also in countries that are the founders of our Community. With the unsuccessful process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty constantly in mind, I feel that it is better to posit smaller but stable steps than to attempt leaps that are always associated with the risk of a fall.

The reality of our changing will come very quickly. It is therefore certain that in a few years' time we shall be debating a new text, a new treaty, one that is more appropriate to the realities that are to come. It is important for us to be able to discern them in time, and for the European Union to retain the capacity to adapt to new challenges.

**Maria da Assunção Esteves (PPE-DE).** – (PT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Lisbon and Rome are departure points for a humanity without borders. The dream of global justice and cosmopolitan law is at the heart of the history of the European Union. It is the history of how moral will took root in the institutions and transformed the old political paradigms. The method followed was sharing, the criterion applied was reason, the goal set was human dignity and sovereignty of rights took precedence over sovereignty of borders; those factors all served to make Europe the home of enlightenment.

In this journey towards large-scale democracy, the Treaty of Lisbon has restored to the European Parliament its parliamentary nature, has broken the legislative hegemony of the Europe of governments and brought new leading figures to the fore to enhance the competitive and political components and reduce bureaucracy. It is true that the European Constitution, with its potential for unity and cohesion, has been delayed but a post-national Europe is emerging. Babel will undoubtedly build its tower.

**Hartmut Nassauer (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, if you have followed the debate this morning, you will have noticed that this Treaty is accompanied by great expectations. First there is the expectation that it should be ratified and enter into force. Then there is the expectation that it will put the European Union in a better position to live up to its task in the world, a position from which it will be able to deal with the consequences of globalisation, and so on and so forth.

I would like to add a further expectation to this: I believe and hope that the Treaty offers another opportunity to take a further step towards reconciling the European Union with its citizens, as there is a gap between the Union and its citizens. This gap was highlighted by the referendums in France and the Netherlands, and it needs to be closed.

The Union needs the endorsement of its citizens, and the new Treaty offers good opportunities for this. It gives the national parliaments the opportunity to participate in creating legislation. Within the framework of subsidiarity, it includes national parliaments, and quite rightly. Therefore, because approval from citizens depends, among other things, on the allocation of tasks between the EU and the Member States being clearer than it has been until now, and managed in a more balanced way. The national parliaments have a contribution to make here.

I do not see us as competing with the national parliaments, but I believe that we must cooperate. I am of the opinion that the national parliaments should also make use of these opportunities. I want to challenge them outright to do so. It will be fascinating to see whether or not this new instrument for monitoring subsidiarity is effective.

One further point: if we look at the European Union from outside, we see an example of regional cooperation, successful regional teamwork, of which there is only one other example in the whole world, and it is not nearly as successful or advanced as the EU: the ASEAN states. As regards ASEAN, they keep a close eye on the European Union as they attempt to cooperate and make a contribution to peace and security in the world.

**Zita Pleštinová (PPE-DE).** – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, because the European Union needs a Reform Treaty that will make it more effective and modern, I will vote for the report by the rapporteurs, Mr Richard Corbett and Mr Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, on the Lisbon Treaty.

Allow me to congratulate those five Member States that have already ratified the Lisbon Treaty. I am convinced that the act of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty faces no danger in Slovakia either. Only one parliamentary party is against it; other than that the Treaty enjoys overall support and the overwhelming majority of members of the national parliament will vote in favour of it.

The current Slovak opposition that deserves most of the credit for Slovakia joining the European family will give its support to the Lisbon Treaty as soon as Slovakia's press law that has been criticised by such European



institutions as Freedom House, the OSCE and the European Federation of Journalists is re-written in accordance with their recommendations.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE).** – (HU) As an MEP for Hungary, the first country to ratify the Reform Treaty, I am well aware that ratification alone is not enough. It has already been mentioned in this Chamber that we need to explain to people – to the citizens of Europe – in what ways this document provides more than national constitutions, to explain the added value of this Reform Treaty.

European politicians need to be made aware of the fact that prime ministers often make the mistake of calling this an institutional reform. It is much more than that. Now we are becoming a political union and a genuine community of interests. Within this community of interests, we must spell out to the citizens of Europe the ways in which the Charter of Fundamental Rights provides added value in the sphere of social rights.

I must give special mention here to the fact that the rights of individuals belonging to minorities have at long last been included in the eighty-thousand-page *acquis communautaire*, since every seventh citizen in Europe, in the European Union, belongs to a long-standing minority. This is a great advance for the treaty.

**Andrew Duff (ALDE).** – Mr President, I would like to ask those colleagues who oppose the Treaty to explain precisely what is they mean when they speak about a 'self-amending' treaty. Could they bring me the clause that provides for this sort of protean development?

I do not see it in the Treaty myself. The fact is that a single change requires the unanimous agreement of all the prime ministers and national parliaments of all the Member States, and important changes that confer fresh competences upon us in the EU require the procedure of a convention, an intergovernmental conference and formal ratification in all Member States.

**Mogens Camre (UEN).** – (DA) Mr President, the Treaty of Lisbon is, as everyone knows, the Constitution Treaty without the flags and music. It is actually rather strange that this is being said so bluntly here, because this is not how it is being done in Denmark. Rather, in Denmark the government is saying, that there is nothing of any significance whatsoever in this Treaty, as it believes that by saying this, it can make its citizens believe that they do not need to be allowed to vote on it. However, with this Treaty, we are witnessing the most far-reaching development of the European Union that there has ever been: more power, more political areas than ever before and a greater loss of control for the European nations than there has ever been previously. It is incredibly unwise of the EU's old core states to coerce the rest of us without asking our citizens. It will lead to negative consequences. Citizens feel that they are losing control and will react against this. A union is not created at a negotiating table within the EU. It can work only if it grows out of the wishes of the people, and this is not what this Union is doing. I therefore intend to vote against it.

**Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL).** – (CS) If European integration is to last, there must be deepening and strengthening of international law. What is happening at the moment is the precise opposite.

The recognition of Kosovo's independence has been a terrible blow to international law and the first casualty of this breach of international law will be European integration and transatlantic relations. I think this is plain to see. The ethnic principle was rejected as a basis for the delimitation of boundaries in the case of Bosnia, yet in the case of Kosovo it has been taken as the only criterion and the only principle. I believe that international law must not be violated with impunity: this results in documents such as the Helsinki Final Act suffering in terms of their credibility.

**Roberta Alma Anastase (PPE-DE).** – (RO) Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to join my colleagues who welcomed the drawing up of this report and to emphasize its fundamental value for the future of Europe.

It is important that the Lisbon Treaty focuses on the role of citizens and the responsibility of institutions. This is why I believe that, via this report, the European Parliament proves that it undertakes its new role in the functioning of the European Union. In this regard, I reiterate the support for all the treaty provisions that stipulate a consolidated role of the parliaments, both at national and European level.

Secondly, I would like to mention the changes that the Lisbon Treaty proposes in the field of the European Union's foreign policy. Their transposition into facts is crucial for consolidating the European action in this direction. Consequently, the essential element of the report is the call for ratification by all the 27 Member States. I express my satisfaction that Romania ratified the Treaty in February 2008, thus becoming the fourth country that has proved its European vocation and firm wish to contribute to the ever more prosperous future of the European Union.

**Miloš Koterec (PSE).** – (SK) I would like to thank the rapporteurs for their excellent work, which clearly defines all the positive aspects of the new Treaty as well as its weaker points. As the saying goes, nobody is perfect. At any rate, let us be thankful for the high quality of the Treaty and for the fact that it reflects the present reality within the European Union and opportunities thus offered at the level of the Treaty.

As the rapporteurs correctly point out, this Treaty strengthens democratic responsibility and decision-making powers, and in this way gives citizens more control over the Union's activities. However, in this context I would like to appeal to the governments of the Member States to provide their citizens with an adequate summary of the Lisbon Treaty, so that it is understood by everyone and so that each person can make an informed decision on whether he/she agrees with the legislation or not: this should be the rule with regard to all European (and not just European) legislation. I am sure that the citizens of the European Union, if well informed, will give the Treaty their unqualified support.

I would also like to stress that such an important document should not become an object of political games as is the case in Slovakia, where the opposition is blocking the adoption of this progressive and democratic document.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I rise here as – I hope – one of the ordinary and decent citizens of Ireland referred to by my colleague MEP, Mr Farage – although I think he has left the Chamber.

I am not surprised that ordinary, decent Irish citizens are confused, because they have strange bedfellows on the 'no' side – Ms McDonald and Mr Farage. It beggars belief! Could I say to Sinn Féin in particular: can they not acknowledge the role of the European Union in peace in Northern Ireland? That is what will be enhanced by this Treaty, not 'militarisation', as they call it.

On the role of national parliaments, can I say this: let national parliaments take the power this Treaty will give them and let the ordinary decent citizens of the countries force them to use that power effectively.

To Mr Duff: there is falsehood being peddled in Ireland on the 'self-amending' Treaty: it is the invention of a negative mind. It is not true and it is not so.

Lastly, let me say that, contrary to the naysayers, like Ms McDonald and Mr Farage, this Treaty is a good deal for Ireland, a good deal for the EU, a good deal for Europe, and I urge citizens in Ireland to vote 'yes'!

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Mr President, I did not expect to be called so quickly. I already made a contribution, but I would like to make just a further point here. We have listened to all the naysayers, the people who tell us that Lisbon will further militarise the Union, that it will lead to social dumping, that it will lead us all in the wrong direction. Well, I have missed a little bit of the debate, but I did not hear anybody comment on Article 49, which states that, if Lisbon is ratified, any Member State can decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.

That means that all of those who believe that they should not be in Europe can advise their citizens to withdraw from the Union after we ratify the Lisbon Treaty. Therefore, they have no excuse not to wish to see this Treaty passed.

**Colm Burke (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, a 'yes' for the Lisbon Treaty is a 'yes' for the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights was initially drawn up to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights within the EU, in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments, by making those rights more visible in the form of a charter.

That Charter covers such diverse areas as care for the elderly, care for people with disabilities, respect for private and family life, the prohibition of torture and the right to effective remedy and to a fair trial. Those rights apply to the EU institutions and bodies and the Member States only when they are implementing EU law. While the Charter does not establish any new powers for the EU, it does make it easier for citizens to find out what their rights and responsibilities are under European law.

The Charter was only a political declaration when it was initially agreed in 2000. If the people of Ireland vote 'yes' to the Lisbon Treaty, they will also be conferring legally-binding treaty status on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, to the benefit of all Irish and EU citizens.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI).** – (FR) Mr President, I note here the fairness with which you chair these debates.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to raise a moral problem by referring back exclusively to statements by people in favour of the ratification of the Treaty, who told us that it is exactly the same as the Constitution.

Such is the case – and he is the expert – with Mr Giscard d'Estaing, who said precisely that, that it is the Constitution but filed in different drawers. Such is the case with Mrs Merkel, who said these exact words – she was speaking in English: 'Let us keep the substance, and change the wording.' Such is the case with Mr Amato, the former Italian Prime Minister, who said that the text was made unreadable because if it had been a simple text, everyone would have realised it was a Constitution and would have called for a referendum. Such is the case with our former fellow Member, Mr de Gucht. Such is the case with the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Mr Juncker.

I therefore think that this deception being practised on the European people poses a moral problem.

**Jan Zahradil (PPE-DE).** – (CS) The European Union is not a state and so it does not need a constitution. This had to be admitted, albeit reluctantly, even by the advocates of the old European Constitution. Unfortunately, not all of them have come to terms with the disappointment, which is why we find paragraph 6 of this report expressing regret over the changes made in the new Treaty in contrast to the draft European Constitution.

I consider this to be a serious mistake. After a difficult journey a consensus was reached among the 27 Member States. Some governments wanted changes to the draft European Constitution and now the report by Mr de Vigo and Mr Corbett indirectly criticises them for their approach. In my opinion, if the European Parliament votes in favour of paragraph 6 of the report, it will be expressing disrespect to the complex consensus obtained by the 27 Member States, and that could only be harmful to the whole matter. I certainly cannot support that paragraph.

**Lambert van Nistelrooij (PPE-DE).** – (NL) Mr President, in addition to social and economic cohesion, this treaty lays down the third objective, territorial cohesion, expressly for the whole Union. There may be clustering in top regions in Europe, but at the same time we are advocating opportunities for employment and economic development throughout the Union. This is an important basis for social and regional policy. It is important to elaborate this in this way and to make it possible to transfer knowledge about entrepreneurship and the use of money and instruments – think of the Structural Funds. I should like to remind the House of this, since it was not raised during this morning's debate. This way, we also show citizens throughout the Union that we are able to offer new solutions for our new circumstances.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE).** – (PT) I think it is essential at this moment to stress the importance and significance of signals in politics; it is our duty to send the right signals to citizens. Rather than continuing the debate in this Parliament on the differences between the Constitutional Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon or on how the Member States should go about ratifying the Treaty, should we not be discussing what we shall do after the Treaty comes into force, as we hope it will? That was what we told our citizens – that institutional reform was necessary in order to achieve more and better results. That reform is now actually here.

Will Europe be better prepared in a year to tackle globalisation, energy dependency, the demographic crisis, terrorism, financial instability and employment change? It will have to be. Will the European Parliament be more vigorous in order to take an active role in the approval of these reforms? Again, it will have to be.

That is the right signal to send out from here today; let us not fulfil the words of the Chinese proverb which says that when the wise man points at the sky, the fool looks at the finger. Let us look towards our future, Mr President, and accept our duty to build it.

**Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I would be interested to learn, Commissioner, the degree of acceptance for the different protocols and texts of the Reform Treaty. Are there any analyses of which points are particularly popular with the public and which points are more problematic? Do you have any market research results to show what the public believes are the three most important goals of this Reform Treaty, so that we can see what the 500 million citizens of the European Union are interested in, that would show that this Reform Treaty is absolutely necessary? Is any analysis or market research available on how well informed people are about this Reform Treaty, both quantitatively and qualitatively? That would be the basis for revealing the importance of this reform step for the European Union.

What steps do you, as Commissioner, plan to take in the immediate future to make this information more readily available to people?

**Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, if the European Union were a car, this Treaty would be about tuning that vehicle. It is very important that we have new structures, especially in the field of foreign and

security policy, and I agree with those people who have stressed the importance of good common foreign and security policy, but it is not enough just to have good structures in place.

If we cannot coordinate our action, and if we cannot really work together and produce common messages to give to a Kissinger or a Rice, then those messages are worth nothing. We need to bring more substance to this debate, and we really need to work towards common views.

We now have the perfect vehicle. We need to start driving it in a certain direction and we need to take on our role in the world. This Treaty gives us the tools with which to do that.

**Pál Schmitt (PPE-DE).** – (HU) Thank you, Mr President. As an MEP representing one of the new Member States, I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the Community solidarity being shown towards us. Without it, the countries of eastern Europe would have been incapable of recovery following 40 years of Soviet occupation.

Please allow me first of all, as chairman of the delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee, to say that the treaty will make for closer and more effective cooperation among the Member States, while at the same time enabling further expansion of the European Union to include those countries that accept and comply with the EU system of values.

In my opinion the treaty sends a positive message to the countries of the western Balkans that have already begun accession negotiations; it will encourage them to speed up reforms, since it puts EU accession easily within their reach.

To conclude, one of the most important and innovative passages of the treaty as far as I am concerned is undoubtedly the passage guaranteeing minority rights, making protection of national and ethnic minorities a fundamental principle of the European Union. Thank you.

**Gay Mitchell (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, as far as I know I am the only Member who is a director of elections for referendums, and I feel no obligation whatsoever to tell the German people that their decision is any less legitimate than the Irish decision simply because we are having a referendum and they have a constitutional reason for not having a referendum.

What sort of referendum do those who argue for a referendum want? Do they want a referendum in which 50% or more of people across the European Union make this decision for them, in which case it will be the big states, or a mixture of small and big states, which will decide for everybody? Or do they mean that it must be over 50% in each Member State, in which case each Member State gives up its right to make the decision to every other Member State! Where is the rationality in that?

Winston Churchill used the phrase 'terminological inexactitudes'. I will say nothing more than that in respect of the yellow-bellies on my right, but they certainly are disingenuous at best!

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – It was a great pleasure for me to be present at this extremely interesting and dynamic debate. Let me split my observations into three categories.

The first category concerns the preparatory activities which have to be completed in order for the Lisbon Treaty, if and when enforced, to be implemented fully. These activities are numerous. It is necessary to prepare for the election of the President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, to establish a common external service and organise activity in the field of justice and home affairs.

These activities have to be conducted patiently and responsibly. I am convinced that no one would like to give the impression that the institutions of the European Union or Member States are trying to grab the largest part of the cake for themselves before it is fully baked.

We therefore have to be aware that, although the preparatory activities have to be completed, the fact remains that the last word in the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty rests with the Member States, that is to say with the national parliaments and, in one case, with the voters. This calls to mind a dilemma which has been mentioned several times today and widely debated over the last few years: referendum or parliamentary ratification?

I would like to thank Mrs Doyle, Mr Mitchell and others who pointed out that it is necessary to respect the decision of the Member States. I stressed in my initial address that the decision on the method of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty falls exclusively within the sovereign competence and responsibility of each Member State.

Nevertheless, I must add the following: there is nothing wrong with parliamentary ratification. Absolutely nothing. All the Member States of the European Union are representative parliamentary democracies and, after all, this honourable assembly, the European Parliament, is a powerful symbol of representative democracy.

Now a few words about the significance of ratification. In my opinion, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty should be considered not only in the current context, but also in a historical context and with a view to the future. I would like to remark on what was said by Mr Schulz and others, namely that we must remember what was happening in our continent a hundred years ago, seventy-five years ago or perhaps, as in the case of my own country, twenty years ago or less. In short, it is our past which has to remind us constantly that it is the European Union which has made a considerable contribution to the peace, stability and prosperity of our continent.

At the same time we have to take the future into account. We must prepare ourselves for the already recognisable challenges awaiting the European Union. It is our firm opinion that the Lisbon Treaty represents a step forward in the right direction and offers us answers to challenges that can be seen on the horizon.

**Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission.** – Mr President, this has indeed been a lively and interesting debate, on which I would like to make three remarks.

First of all, I will deal with implementation, since several of you have raised particular, specific issues on implementation and follow-up. I would also like to say something about the discussion on democracy that has taken place here, and to link that to communication and debate.

To start with the questions from Mr Deprez, Mr Dehaene, Mr Barón Crespo and Mr Duff, several of you have asked about what happens now in terms of preparing for the implementation of the new Reform Treaty.

I expect that preparations are going on in all the institutions, in that we are looking at what will be required of our respective institutions – in the case of the Commission coming forward with specific legislative proposals – and what this will take in terms of interinstitutional cooperation and practical preparations. This will have to be done with full respect for the ratification process that is now going on.

Our approach in the Commission has been to do this in a formally absolutely correct way and to respect the ratification processes – not to anticipate but to be prepared. I believe this has also been the approach in the Council, where an inventory has been carried out, and we are, of course, looking in the same way at the obligations that will fall on the Commission.

We will, of course, cooperate with Parliament and will sit down and look at what has to be done in practical terms. It is good that a discussion is also under way in the respective institutions to ensure that everything is ready and can be handled in a formally absolutely correct way. We are getting ready, of course, to start the practical work.

A lot has been said about democracy, bringing to mind what Churchill, who has already been referred to, said about it: ‘democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time’.

Whichever ratification method is chosen – and it is up to every government and every Member State to decide which one to use – the Commission will respect it, and will also consider ratification by national parliaments to be democratically legitimate. Whichever method is chosen, there will have to be communication with citizens.

I would inform everyone who has asked for a consolidated text that the message from the Council is that such a text will be produced, hopefully as soon as possible, and that in the spring we will definitely have a consolidated text from the Council. I know that, to date, a good dozen consolidated texts are available in different language versions. I know that the House of Lords has produced a consolidated text; I know that the French Senate has produced a consolidated text; and I know it also exists in Germany. It is available on the internet.

This means that one cannot use the lack of available information as an excuse. All the texts are available, and there is also information available on the Commission’s website, which gives questions and answers and factual information about the Treaty, relating to the specific substantial issues.

There is an obligation on all of us to help citizens to have access to all the factual information that they need, and also to have answers to their specific questions.

In response to what Mr Rübzig said, we know from previous Eurobarometer opinion polls that people are interested in the substantial issues first and foremost, and not so much in the institutional issues. But I expect that several Member States will also carry out specific opinion polls to check on public opinion in the respective Member States. We will see more of this in the coming months. The Commission will monitor these issues in general, through the Eurobarometer.

Please refer citizens and everyone you meet to our new website, which is called 'Debate Europe'. We have relaunched 'Debate Europe' to include the new Reform Treaty. Follow the debate, and please encourage people to make interventions and participate in the debate on the internet.

Let me also say that I hope we can engage young people and women in this debate, because in talking about democracy and representative democracy, we also want to see more women in the debate, hopefully also as leaders of our institutions and of the European Union in the future.

If women do not see that they are represented, they will hesitate before they give their support to our different projects and decisions. So this is also a democratic task and mission for all of us.

Finally, Mr Nassauer made a very important point about the national parliaments and how we can follow up in this area and ensure it is complementary. The increased and strengthened role of the European Parliament fits well with anchoring this matter into national parliamentary procedures in every Member State. This is also something we will have to prepare properly and thoroughly, with the national parliaments. They have a big role which should be fully prepared.

Thank you for this debate. The Commission will work closely with Parliament and with the Council in order to prepare for implementation and will definitely make every effort to communicate and make sure that people have access to all the information and the debate fora that they need to discuss the future of Europe.

**Richard Corbett**, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, this debate has shown that, in this Parliament, the elected representatives of the peoples of our 27 countries approve this Treaty by a very large majority. Every single party that is in government in our Member States and almost every single one of the principal opposition parties in every Member State – except the British Conservatives, of course – support this Treaty.

All the main Christian Democrat parties support it. It is supported by all the Socialist parties in each of our countries. It is supported by the Liberal Democrat parties in each of our countries, the majority of the Green parties and even the Conservative parties, except, of course, the British Conservatives. Opposition to this Treaty is mainly from the far right and some on the extreme left of this House. It is, though, curious to see this new political alliance being forged by Sinn Féin and the British Conservative Party in opposing this Treaty.

Some of those have argued here today that this Treaty is being adopted without us having access to the documents – that no consolidated Treaty has been published. But, as I pointed out yesterday, several Member States have published a consolidated version of the Treaty.

Then they complain, like Mr Bonde, that this does not show the amendments to the Treaty, but the amendments have, of course, been available since December in every language in the Official Journal. Frankly, any Member of the European Parliament who says he or she has not been able to read this text is not doing the job which they have been paid to do. It is pure laziness.

Secondly, some of them have come here and said that the European Parliament should call for a referendum. I find it quite amusing that those who oppose the European Parliament having powers, that are against the European Union being able to tell Member States what to do, come here and say that we should tell sovereign Member States what their internal procedures should be to ratify an international treaty. That is hypocrisy in the extreme.

Finally, I notice that many of them were absent from the debate for long periods, because they were outside the Chamber dressed as chickens. I think that is very symbolic. *They* are chicken, because they chickened out of the debate here, as they are afraid of the verdict of this democratic debate, a verdict which is overwhelmingly positive about this Treaty: that it is a good Treaty that will improve and democratise our Union.

(Applause)

**Íñigo Méndez de Vigo**, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Mr President, today reference has been made to European integration from a historical point of view.

The European Union that we have built in the last 50 years is the Europe of debate and dialogue, the Europe of respect for others, the Europe of putting ourselves in the shoes of others in order to understand them. This idea has been highlighted by the vast majority of this House in the debate that we have had today.

However, in the debate there was also another Europe, Mr President, which I call the Europe of the three 'c's': the Europe of conflict, condemnation and contempt. As democrats we do not like this Europe, because we believe that there can and should be debate and dialogue but there should not be any condemnation.

I think, Mr President, that many things have been said here today, some of which are entirely false.

I am going to mention one in particular: when it is said that this Lisbon Treaty incorporates new doses of qualified majority, that is true, but what is not said is that the Lisbon Treaty means greater participation by the European Parliament. How can someone be a Member of this House and not want it to have greater participation in the political decisions that affect the European people?

*(Applause)*

I will conclude, Mr President, by quoting Miguel de Cervantes who, when old and at the end of his life, said that there were occasions when we had to decide whether to be a road or an inn. Being an inn is staying where you are. Being a road is moving forwards.

I hope, Mr President, that, as my political group is going to do, and as the majority of the political groups in this House are going to do, we will vote in favour of the Lisbon Treaty with our hearts and minds. Let us use the democratic vote to give democratic recognition to those of us who want more Europe for all Europeans.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – The debate is closed.

We shall now proceed to the vote. This is the first item of voting time, which starts straight away.

#### **Written statements (Rule 142)**

**Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL), in writing.** — (GA) When everything is taken into account it must be said that the European Union has been good for Ireland.

However, this referendum is about the Lisbon Treaty. Whether or not the European Union has been beneficial for Ireland is irrelevant.

The Lisbon Treaty gives exclusive competence in the area of commercial policy to the European Institutions including negotiations of international commercial agreements. It empowers the Commission to initiate and conduct negotiations, including negotiating international commercial agreements, before reporting to the Council of Ministers. Article 10(a) mandates 'through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade' and it is a guiding principle for the Commission in its interaction with non-Member States. From October 2006 the EU has made an effort to end 'cross-border obstacles' in its dealings with developing countries. Obstacles, such as environmental regulations, consumer protection regulations and health regulations irrespective of the consequences associated with removing these regulations. When these two aspects are considered, much is revealed of the significant step back of the EU in terms of its approach in dealing with world poverty and inequality.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) Just when the ratification process of the Treaty of Lisbon is under way, the European Parliament is once more overstepping its powers, attempting to influence public opinion with a report expressing its approval of that Treaty and pressing all EU Member States to ratify the Treaty in time for it to come into force on 1 January 2009. That is a real political ploy, since Parliament's competence does not extend to adopting European treaties. Member States have competence in that sphere: initially via the Intergovernmental Conference and thereafter via ratification by each Member State, in accordance with each country's fundamental legislation.

Since the EU now wishes to side-step referendums so as to avoid another rejection of the Treaty, as happened in France and the Netherlands in 2005, in principle only Ireland will have a referendum.

Evading referendums by means of a whole variety of pretexts, shows up a fear of the consequences of giving citizens the vote in Portugal and the other EU countries. These countries know that the content of the Treaty

of Lisbon is the same as the content of the 'European Constitution'. The name has been changed simply to try to trick citizens in what constitutes a true political fraud. We therefore oppose the report.

**Katrin Saks (PSE), in writing.** – (ET) The most crucial topic for the European Union is the Lisbon Treaty because the future of Europe is in the balance, as is the way in which it will cope in a world which is changing year on year more quickly than we are. I have three observations to make:

1) First, to welcome the fact that France, where the crisis accompanying the referendums shock began, was the first 'old European' country to ratify the treaty, thereby acting as an example to others that European integration must certainly continue.

2) Second, I hope that during ratification Member States will not start to use the treaty as a political tool, as occurred in Slovakia where the opposition, although in favour of the Treaty, made ratification conditional upon the governing party withdrawing a draft law with which the opposition disagreed. The most important EU matters must not be scuppered by domestic issues!

3) Finally I wish to express the hope that the Reform Treaty will put an end to the nonsense put about by some European politicians that we can continue with the old treaties. Quite the opposite, globalisation not only requires greater dedication to making aspirations a reality, but also broader agreement as to the form of the Union's policies and a new basic document with which to achieve it.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

*President*

#### 4. Voting time

**President.** – We shall now proceed to the vote.

*(For results and other details on the vote: see Minutes)*

##### 4.1. (A6-0013/2008, Richard Corbett) Treaty of Lisbon (vote)

*– Before the vote on Amendment 29*

**Richard Corbett, rapporteur.** – Mr President, I just wish to clarify that this amendment should be addressed, as on our voting list, to paragraph 2(c), which is where it actually fits in properly in the text, instead of paragraph 5(e).

*– After the vote on the motion for a resolution*

*(Standing ovation)*

*(Protests from the IND/DEM Group)*

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, you have voted in favour of the Reform Treaty by an overwhelming majority. This is the expression of the free will of the people you represent. I congratulate you sincerely on this convincing result. The European Parliament represents the peoples of Europe. This Treaty gives the European Union more legal capacity to act and ensures more democracy.

*(Applause)*

We defend Europe's common values and we will never permit those with the loudest voice to dominate the open discussion of reasons for and against. This is a free, democratic Europe. Many congratulations on this convincing result!

*(Applause)*

*(Protests from the IND/DEM Group)*

Those who demanded these roll-call votes on amendments that contain nothing but questions ought to explain to their voters how much that cost. I tell you, as surely as you sit here now, what you did will harm your reputation. I think your parents would be ashamed to see you like this.



(Applause)

#### **4.2. (A6-0471/2007, Ona Juknevičienė) Population and housing censuses (vote)**

#### **4.3. Lisbon strategy (vote)**

– Before the vote on Amendment 12

**Udo Bullmann (PSE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to suggest a change to Amendment 12 which, naturally, does not replace the amendment but inserts an additional formulation in the second sentence. This additional formulation is worded:

‘or through collective agreements in accordance with national traditions’. This comes after ‘generally binding arrangements’, and before ‘that enable full-time workers to make a decent living from their earnings.’

(DE) An amendment suggesting this supplementary formulation is designed to take into account conditions in Scandinavia and has been agreed with the co-rapporteurs and the groups who are also requesting it.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

#### **4.4. (A6-0029/2008, Margarita Starkevičiūtė) Broad Economic Policy Guidelines for 2008-2010 (vote)**

– Before the vote on Amendment 39

**Margarita Starkevičiūtė, rapporteur.** – Mr President, we now have a text which says: ‘Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission’, and I would like to add the words ‘and the governments and parliaments of the Member States’.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on Amendment 6

**Margarita Starkevičiūtė, rapporteur.** – Mr President, I would just like to clarify the issue. If those amendments are rejected, then we need to delete points 2 and 3 in guideline 7, which I repeated in guideline 15. This also applies to the PSE Group Amendment 13, and I would like to ask the groups to vote as I said, in order to avoid duplication of the text.

– After the vote on the motion for a resolution

**Pervenche Berès (PSE).** – (FR) Mr President, we have just amended the economic policy guidelines by a very large majority.

Mr Almunia is not here, but I ask Mrs Wallström to give very strong support to the new proposals the European Parliament is making to improve the economic situation of all our citizens.

(Applause)

#### **4.5. (A6-0503/2007, Cem Özdemir) An EU Strategy for Central Asia (vote)**

– Before the vote on paragraph 63

**Alojz Peterle (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I would like to inform my colleagues in the PPE-DE Group that there is a mistake in the second part of the split vote. The right decision is ‘no’, not ‘yes’.

– Before the vote on paragraph 69

**Cem Özdemir, rapporteur.** – (DE) Mr President, this oral amendment is intended to make the text more precise and up to date. By tabling it I have also carried out the wish of the shadow rapporteur. I will read it out in English:

'Welcomes as a positive step towards reform of the criminal justice system in Uzbekistan the approval by the Uzbek Parliament of the laws on the abolition of the death penalty and the authorisation of courts to issue arrest warrants. Calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the criminal justice system that would effectively promote the implementation of these reforms.'

*(The oral amendment was accepted.)*

– *Before the vote on Amendment 17*

**Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, before we come to the final vote, I just wanted to say that I am bewildered, because all my yellow neighbours have disappeared. There is only one left.

**President.** – We will note that in the minutes, although I would prefer not to comment on it.

#### IN THE CHAIR: Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT

*Vice-President*

### 5. Explanations of vote

#### Oral explanations of vote

##### - Report: Richard Corbett, Inigo Méndez de Vigo (A6-0013/2008)

**Frank Vanhecke (NI).** – *(NL)* Mr President, the vote on the Corbett / Méndez de Vigo report that has just been held is a further confirmation by this Parliament of the attitude we have been taking for a very long time now: that of total disdain for the democratically expressed will of the majority in France, the Netherlands and elsewhere. Although this Parliament claims to represent all European citizens, in reality those citizens do not have the slightest say. When the President of this House, Mr Pöttering, said just now that, with this vote, Parliament was expressing the opinion of the majority of European citizens, it was nothing short of a pathetic lie. Parliament has made not a single demand for the will of the people to be respected, nor a plea for a referendum to be held in every Member State. On the contrary, the only thing this Parliament has required is that this duplicate of the late Constitution enter into force as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this Parliament represents not citizens, but simply the elite consensus of the official Europe.

**Syed Kamall (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I voted against the report because, once again, the political elite of the European Union is trying to ram through the Constitutional Treaty without consulting the peoples of Europe. The British Government promised a referendum on this Treaty, yet now it is pretending that it is somehow different. You only have to listen to leader after leader, such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to realise that there is actually no difference.

I say to you, the European political elite, that if you think you are building a European project but are building a European project without the will of the people, then you are in fact building a castle made of sand. As the late, great Jimi Hendrix once said, castles made of sand fall into the sea eventually. The ratification of the European Constitution, despite its rejection in two referendums, is undemocratic, cowardly and illegitimate.

**Daniel Hannan (NI).** – Mr President, in my eight years in this Parliament, I have heard some rather absurd claims made in this Chamber, but a special humbug prize must go to the assertion that what we just did in pushing through this Treaty by a huge vote represented a free exercise of will of the peoples of Europe.

You know very well that is untrue, those of you who applauded so heartily when those lines were spoken. You know it, and I can prove that you know it, because you used to support referendums until it became clear that you would lose them. In fact, what this vote did was underline the remoteness of the Members of this House from their own constituents. The cancellation of the referendums is an act of cowardice and an abdication of leadership, and you know it.

If I am wrong, prove me wrong. Put the Treaty to the referendums that you supported when you thought you could win them. Put the Lisbon Treaty to the vote. *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est!*

**Hannu Takkula (ALDE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, I would like to give a brief explanation of why I abstained. I think we ought to remember that our Parliament has no competence in this matter: it falls within the competence of the Member States, and we have to respect that. It is the Member States that have to decide whether or not to adopt this new Treaty of Lisbon.

Now I think we should stop and recall what the power relationships are. Personally, I am of the opinion that it should be left to nation states to take this decision. It would not be such a bad idea if the public were asked about it, as the decision-making process will acquire greater legitimacy if the people are allowed to influence it.

There is much that is good in this treaty, but there are also parts which cannot be accepted, and if I think about it from the point of view of one Member State, Finland, which is where I am from, it has many aspects which are not acceptable to us. In any case, however, the powers of decision in these areas lie with the national parliaments.

(Applause)

#### **- Resolution on Lisbon strategy (B6-0073/2008)**

**Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE).** – (SK) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the Lisbon Strategy, which will be on the agenda of the spring European Council. I agree with the draftsmen that the Lisbon Strategy will be successful only if it draws on human resources in an environment that is favourable and conducive to learning, knowledge, science, research, culture, information and innovation.

In order to meet the goals of the Lisbon Strategy we need three players: universities as architects of knowledge, businesses that know how to use this knowledge in practice, and a public sector and local government bodies that can create permanently sustainable infrastructure for science, research and development at a national and regional level. Innovation needs financial investment: funding will bring knowledge. Knowledge invested in innovation will boost this financial contribution. Only those small and medium-sized enterprises that are inventive and creative can survive tough competition. I believe that Europe will be able to find its place alongside the American/Japanese knowledge express of the 21st century.

**Ivo Strejček (PPE-DE).** – (CS) I voted against the report and, with your permission, I would now like to state my reasons for doing so.

Firstly, the text as a whole presents the European Union as being a global economic and social power. Secondly, it talks about a so-called leading role for the EU in the world and blindly believes that the rest of the world will develop in line with the EU's own wishes. Thirdly, it states that the European Union will play a leading role in the creation of some kind of global standards. Fourthly, the Lisbon Strategy makes economic cooperation with other countries conditional on enforceability of the main labour standards. Fifthly, the Lisbon Strategy is explicitly derived from the so-called Lisbon Treaty, despite the fact that it has not as yet been ratified by most of the Member States. The declaration calls for the introduction of a minimum wage in Member States that do not have a minimum wage.

**Othmar Karas (PPE-DE).** – (DE) The Austrian People's Party Europaklub in the European Parliament voted enthusiastically in favour of the Corbett/Méndez de Vigo report because the Lisbon Treaty strengthens the citizens of Europe, the Member States and the European Union. The citizens of Europe and the parliaments that represent them are the winners. In the light of the Kosovo debate, we see how important this Treaty is because through it we are far more likely to achieve a common foreign and security policy. Making the Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding shows us the way forward to make fundamental rights a possibility for all citizens in the European Union. Anyone not in favour of this Treaty as a whole is against the citizens. We must continue to stand with the people and bring this treaty closer to them.

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, I voted in favour of the report because I believe in it wholeheartedly, as it creates a balance between economic and social measures that must be found because, for the first time, a social Europe is being introduced here and because for the first time, the Member States are being called upon by a large majority in Parliament to take measures to introduce a minimum wage. I am pleased that the majority has been able to prevent measures that were intended to do away with social achievements such as, for example, the Working Time Directive, and the export of social benefits across borders. Overall, then, I voted enthusiastically to approve this balanced package of measures.

**Nirj Deva (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I want to say I voted against the report on the Lisbon Treaty. The cat is out of the bag, and we have thrown the baby out with the bath-water. While we are trying to create a common market, we have actually, by stealth, created a common country.

We have refused to get our people involved in the process. We have denied them their natural right to be able to speak about how they should be governed and we have ignored, as much as we can, the fact that they should have had a referendum.

How can we say to our people, our constituents, that this Parliament represents their views, when their views are not allowed to be heard? The British Government – Mr Brown, in particular – promised a referendum. Mr Brown, in particular, and Mr Blair, in particular, said they would give the British people a referendum. I am very, very sorry for this day and I am very sorry for the broken promises of the Labour Government.

**Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, in the vote on the Lisbon Treaty I was obliged to abstain. In my language, and in Poland, the Treaty is not accessible. My electorate has not been given the opportunity to familiarise itself with it, and I am here, after all, to represent its views and interests, and not just my own convictions. On Monday, here in the European Parliament, a decision was taken to vote today on a document that some of us have no opportunity to read in consolidated form in our own language. A decision on a document of inaccessible content can be taken only by someone who is either stupid or dishonest. That is why I abstained.

**- Report: Margarita Starkevičiūtė (A6-0029/2008)**

**Ivo Strejček (PPE-DE).** – (CS) Mr President, I voted against the report for the following reasons.

The report talks about a fairer distribution of profits and introduces the concept of full employment through public investment. It is trying to compensate for the so-called failure of the market through taxation: introducing eco taxes and supporting science and research by means of tax write-offs, which will make the tax system less transparent and require new European legislation.

**Philip Claeys (NI).** – (NL) Mr President, I voted against the Starkevičiūtė report, as the passage about immigration shows the typical short-sightedness that has already cost us dearly. There are evidently those who want to see a repeat performance of the mistakes of the 1960s and 1970s, when people thought only of the short term and imported human beings like commodities. The results of that policy can now be seen in our cities: wholesale unemployment, crime, the development of parallel societies. Instead of learning from the mistakes of the past, we are stubbornly continuing on the same path. It is becoming even worse now that there is a proposal to conduct a European migration policy to 'complement' Member States' policies. This is guaranteed to bring even more laxity than we are already seeing, and that is probably the last thing we need.

**Koenraad Dillen (NI).** – (NL) Mr President, like my fellow Member, Mr Claeys, I voted against this report. Of course, many aspects of the report are undoubtedly true and relevant. Examples are the modernisation of labour markets, investment in entrepreneurship and simplification of tax systems that it advocates. Nevertheless, this House is completely missing the mark if it regards a European migration policy of attracting economic migrants as a spearhead of the Lisbon Strategy. Moreover, it is not economic openness that is a miracle cure for illegal immigration, as is being argued, but rather enforced control of the external borders of the Union, a rejection of any national mass-legalisation policy and a firm policy of deporting illegal immigrants.

**- Report: Cem Özdemir (A6-0503/2007)**

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Mr President, we have accepted an important document concerning relations between the EU and Central Asia. This is an example of our wishing to share experience and values that are universal in Europe, and to win developing democracies in this region of the world over to those values. These countries have made huge progress on the road to economic development. They must, however, take firm steps to prevent the violation of fundamental and essential human rights and freedoms. They must cope with a series of problems, namely increased drug smuggling, organised crime, corruption and human trafficking. Another basic issue should be improved contacts between our citizens, promoting cultural exchange and setting up a special programme of grants for young people to study at European schools, thus becoming familiar with EU values and standards.

We wish our partners from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan success on the road to prosperity, freedom and democracy, to enable them to support others in the future and share their achievements.

**Written explanations of vote**

**- Report: Richard Corbett, Inigo Méndez de Vigo (A6-0013/2008)**

**Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing.** – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats voted in favour of the report on the Treaty of Lisbon today. We support the new treaty. However, we realise that the fact that two Member States rejected the proposed constitution meant that we were forced to make changes. We do not therefore share the view that it is to be deplored that the flag and the anthem were taken out of the treaty. Unlike the majority in Parliament, we believe that it is good that an ‘emergency accelerator’ has been introduced into the decision-making procedure in areas that are sensitive in terms of national sovereignty.

We are advocates of the subsidiarity principle and therefore reject the call made by the European Parliament for referendums in the Member States. It is a matter which each Member State must itself decide.

Lastly, we would like to comment on the vote on Amendment 36 concerning the Laval case. We chose to vote against the first part because we consider that there are differences between the old treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon, for example in the Charter of Rights, which lays down among other things the right to take strike action in accordance with national practice. We support the provisions of the Charter of Rights and we also support the second part of the amendment which safeguards the right to industrial disputes. We wish to point out that this view is shared by our political group in Parliament which chose to vote against the proposal because the report concerns the treaty and not the Laval case.

**Batten, Bloom, Booth, Clark, Farage, Natrass, Titford and Whittaker (IND/DEM), in writing.** – Although UKIP rejects the Lisbon Treaty, we abstained on amendment 31 because we do not agree with the justification for the amendment.

**Pervenche Berès (PSE), in writing.** – (FR) I still firmly believe that, as President Sarkozy was not going to organise a referendum, abstention was the position the Socialists had to take in the French parliament. However, just because the French President did a poor job of negotiating this Treaty and ignored the vote of the French people, that does not mean we should not respond to the question being put before us today.

The Treaty is far from perfect, but it enables us to bring the institutional debate to a close and equip Europe with rules that allow it to function. Today, the Socialists should make themselves heard on policy changes, the main issue in the revision of the financial perspective, on the French Presidency of the European Union, and on the PSE’s commitment in drawing up its manifesto for the next European elections.

A ‘no’ would have made it possible to remove the policies from the text of what should have been a Constitution, as it forced Europe to focus on the issue of what the European project was all about. This is very important.

However, because I want this text to be passed so I can get fully involved in the forthcoming negotiations on policies, because my ‘no’ more than two years ago was pro-European, I am shouldering my responsibilities and approving the Treaty of Lisbon.

**Adam Bielan, Marcin Libicki and Konrad Szymański (UEN), in writing.** – (PL) I abstained in the final vote on the report on the Lisbon Treaty, because the report has gone well beyond the agreements reached at the EU summits in Brussels and Lisbon.

The Lisbon Treaty was a very difficult compromise for all parties involved. Going beyond this compromise – as evidenced by the mentions of an absence of EU symbols, agreements on the Council voting system relating to opt-in and opt-out clauses and the Charter of Fundamental Rights – is politically damaging to the process of ratification.

Moreover, I cannot support the points that prepare the ground for campaigns aimed at constitutionalising the Union.

**Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon is the best compromise for overcoming the institutional crisis and bringing greater flexibility to the decision-making mechanisms that are essential for an enlarged European Union of 27 Members to function in today’s globalised and constantly changing world.

I applaud the fact that the EU is given legal personality, that the three-pillar structure is abolished in favour of a single institutional framework and across-the-board application of the Community method.

I applaud the measures to improve transparency and accountability, and to strengthen the participation and rights of European citizens both at the information level and through the people’s legislative initiative.

I welcome the changes in the area of freedom, security and justice, where action will have more ambitious goals and more effective procedures, no longer using intergovernmental instruments and procedures.

I applaud greater involvement of the national parliaments, in particular in monitoring respect for the principle of subsidiarity.

I am sorry that various concessions had to be made, for example postponing the implementation of important elements, such as the new voting system in the Council, and the British and Irish opt-outs/opt-ins on matters previously covered by the third pillar; I fear that establishing an elected President of the European Council will mean losing the advantages of the rotating Presidencies without bringing any added value for the functioning of the EU, creating problems in relations between the different institutions.

**Paul Marie Coûteaux, Patrick Louis and Philippe de Villiers (IND/DEM), in writing.** – (FR) The European Parliament has just approved the Treaty of Lisbon, though nobody was asking it to do so.

The Mouvement pour la France delegation in the European Parliament obviously voted against this report, aware of the purely symbolic nature of doing so.

It is significant that French and Dutch elected representatives sitting in Strasbourg are voting in favour of a Treaty while clearly admitting that it is a clone of the defunct European Constitution, even though their people formally rejected that text. It is also significant that the European Parliament is voting on a Treaty even though none of its Members has been able to read a consolidated version. After the Hungarian Parliament ratified it in the dark, the European Parliament is approving a text it has not read.

The MPF delegation in the European Parliament now wishes all the freedom-loving Irish luck: their referendum will not be theirs alone, they will be voting on behalf of everyone who has not been given the chance to do so, particularly the French, whose vote was cast aside.

**Manuel António dos Santos (PSE), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of this report and support the respective resolution.

However, at the last moment, there was a problem with the voting machine, so I was not physically able to express my total approval.

To place that appropriately on record, I am submitting this explanation of vote.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) This is a lamentable European Parliament resolution aimed solely at confusing citizens and putting pressure on Member States to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, since the European Parliament does not have competence for such approval. Only the Member States can ratify it.

Even so, during the debate and the vote, we supported democratic actions aimed at introducing an element of pluralism into the debate and we stressed the need for greater democracy, demanding referendums. That is why our group tabled some motions for resolutions which were, unfortunately, rejected, specifically motions expressing our opposition to the Treaty of Lisbon, underlining some of its more worrying aspects, such as the trend towards the militarisation of the European Union in close liaison with NATO, imposing an increase in military spending and providing for the conducting of military operations in order to *protect the Union's values and serve its interests*.

We also condemn the fact that the provisions of the current Treaties, on which the European Court of Justice recently based its judgments (Judgments in the Laval/Vaxholm and Viking Line cases) to justify social dumping and subordinate the rights of workers to take collective action to respect for the freedom to provide services, have been included in their entirety in the Treaty of Lisbon, requiring that the right to take collective action shall remain under the exclusive competence of the Member States.

**Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing.** – I welcome this report by Mr Méndez de Vigo and Mr Corbett, which both emphasises the fact that the Reform Treaty is not the Constitution, while also enabling Europe to pursue the new global role it will have to play in the coming decades.

It strengthens the institutional power of the Union. It enhances democracy by empowering the European Parliament. It enables the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy to develop to ensure that Europe's economic and industrial power is reflected in global politics, and in particular will allow the EU to play a key role in tackling global warming.

**Robert Goebbels (PSE), in writing.** – (FR) I voted 'yes' to the Treaty of Lisbon because there is – unfortunately – no alternative. However, we must be clear. It is not with a 300-page mini-treaty that is as unintelligible as it is obscure that the EU will win the trust of its citizens, particularly as the multiple opt-outs will lead to a Europe of constant deadlocks, or even a 'variable-geometry' Europe.

This new Treaty is just a last resort. We need very quickly to draw up a treaty of radical reform, to be ratified by a single referendum of the European people. All countries where the voters say 'no' will be free to leave the EU or else submit to the common rules. That is the price to be paid for a truly integrated European Union with more cohesive policies.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – (FR) We have rarely come across such a Stalinist report here in this House: it is pure, mendacious propaganda! It is only here and in 'Sarkozia' that it can be said that the Treaty of Lisbon is fundamentally different from the European Constitution, when the vast majority of EU heads of state and government and the father of the Constitution itself, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, state the exact opposite.

The rapporteurs have indulged in a bit of culture at the start of the explanatory statement, quoting a few lines from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. This quotation explains in substance that you need to follow the underlying forces that lead to the great changes in society, otherwise you will end in ruin and failure. The problem is that, for them, these forces are the Treaty of Lisbon and the artificial, forced creation of a centralised European superstate, when the real forces, in this affair, are the increasing rejection of this project by the people. The people aspire to rediscover their roots and their identity, and to find protection against changes they reject but that others want to impose on them: the political constructions that take away their freedoms and the financial globalisation that ruins them.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** – (SV) The majority of this Parliament is showing once again how divorced from reality it is. The results of referendums clearly have no value if they go against the will of the political establishment.

We in the June List advocate a referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon in Sweden. It is first and foremost for each Member State to decide whether it holds a referendum.

The entire process surrounding a new EU treaty has been a disgrace. A Convention whose working method was heavily criticised put forward a proposal for an EU constitution. Then debate was avoided, things were tinkered with and tweaked in order to push through an even more federalist treaty despite a 'no' from the French and Dutch peoples.

We want to see a new treaty that is based on the EU being a forum primarily for intergovernmental cooperation.

We have therefore voted against Parliament's report on the Treaty of Lisbon.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) Well might the majority of the European Parliament – which includes members of the Portuguese socialist (PS), social democrat (PSD) and popular right (CDS/PP) parties – proclaim their 'approval' of the proposed EU Treaty which, as many well know, has no value or legal consequence.

They have a different objective: pressure, specifically to ensure that the proposed Treaty is ratified so that it can enter into force on 1 January 2009, and propaganda.

That is why the report deals in obfuscations and omissions, in an attempt to conceal the real content and consequences of the proposed EU Treaty. To give just a few examples:

On the one hand it describes as 'greater effectiveness' the increased domination of the decision-making process by the great powers of the EU and as 'an increased role for the national parliaments' the transfer of the national parliaments' competences to the supranational institutions of the EU. On the other hand, it omits: the militarisation of the EU within the framework of NATO; the liberalised single market with its free movement of goods, capital and services in which competition is paramount; Economic and Monetary Union with its euro, its European Central Bank and its Stability Pact; and the liberalisation of international trade as EU policies and objectives.

That is why we voted against it.

**Marian Harkin (ALDE), in writing.** – I am voting plus for this amendment, even though the Lisbon Treaty can only come into force after it is ratified by all Member States - it therefore automatically respects the

outcome of Ireland's referendum. However, I am voting for this amendment, even though it adds nothing to the Report.

**Anna Hedh (PSE), in writing. – (SV)** As before in matters in relation to the EU's new treaty, I chose to differ from my group and voted against the report on the Treaty of Lisbon. There are certainly plenty of improvements in the proposal, but I am opposed to the Union's current move towards greater supranationalism. I want European cooperation at intergovernmental level. I firmly support the idea of international cooperation to resolve common problems. There are important tasks that we must carry out together, not least in relation to the environment, human trafficking and social dumping. However, I believe that the proposal strengthens the primacy of EU law over national law, that more power is taken from the Member States, and that the larger countries are given more power than the small countries. This is something I am opposed to.

I chose to vote against the amendment proposing that the EU decide on referendums throughout the Union because I believe that it is for each Member State to decide this itself.

**Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), in writing. – (PL)** In the final vote on the report (A6-0013/2008) by Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo on the Treaty of Lisbon, I abstained. The reason I did so was that the conclusions that arise from this report go significantly beyond the framework adopted during the talks at the summits in Lisbon and Brussels (13 and 14 December 2007).

The compromise reached at that time was the result of certain concessions on the part of all the interested parties. I therefore think that the express criticism of these settlements that is to be found in some of the points of the report in question is not helpful to the process of finding solutions that are capable of being accepted by all parties to the compromises. This concerns, for example, opt-in and opt-out clauses, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Council voting system and EU symbols, and it also relates to the formulations that lead to a return of the idea that was, after all, rejected, that of a European constitution.

**Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE), in writing. –** British Conservatives voted against this report. From the start, we have made it clear that this Treaty (Constitution) is not the way forward for Europe. Conservatives support a Europe of independent states working together to meet the challenges of globalisation, global poverty and global warming – as our priorities – in a cooperative fashion, and we have been clear and consistent in our approach, in full knowledge of the likely effect of the Treaty on our aims and ambitions for Europe. These things are not achieved by this text or by the aspirations of those who want an integrated European State.

**Jean Lambert (Verts/ALE), in writing. –** I voted for this report, not because I consider that the Lisbon Treaty amendments offer the way to a European Union which is firmly based on a commitment to sustainable development, peace and human rights rather than the market and competition, but because I consider it does have factors which are more positive than our current Treaty arrangements. The Charter of Fundamental Rights is an important addition. All EU legislation and its implementation at Member State level will now have to be checked against the Charter and can be challenged if it falls short.

Greater codecision will mean more scrutiny and more daylight in the decision-making process. The Citizens' Initiative is an important step forward. I have grave concerns about greater military cooperation, which is already under way, and want our national and European Parliament to closely scrutinise this development. It is crucial that the EU builds on its strengths as a diplomatic and peace-building power.

I believe it is important that EU citizens are involved in the ratification process through referendums and that those results should be respected. It is the task of governments and the Council to respond practically to that general principle, not this Parliament.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE), in writing. – (DE)** I am voting in favour of the report on a European Parliament resolution on the Treaty of Lisbon because this Treaty is vital to Europe's further development, and that is absolutely necessary for the further blossoming of the Austrian welfare model and the security of our citizens. I share the view that, overall, the Treaty represents a major improvement on previous treaties and that it will ensure increased democratic scrutiny in the Union. I see the growth in democratic value of the European Union firstly in the extension of the co-determination procedure, secondly in the double majority voting mechanism and thirdly in the election of the Commission President by a majority decision of the European Parliament and, last but not least, in the stronger representation of national parliaments through the opportunity to object to violations in relation to the distribution of competences and the opportunity for national parliaments to comment on all of the EU's legislative initiatives.



**Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – I voted against this report in order to register my objection to the arrogance and disregard shown by political leaders throughout the EU towards the wishes of EU citizens, and to state very clearly that I believe the people of the EU should be given a referendum on this issue.

The Treaty of Lisbon is essentially a repackaging of the old Constitution, which was rejected by France and the Netherlands – two countries where referenda had been allowed. As a key architect of the original text, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, himself has said that 'The proposals in the original Constitutional Treaty are practically unchanged. They have simply been dispersed through the old Treaties in the form of amendments.'

I do not oppose the principle of a constitution. But I oppose this particular one (and the Treaty which reproduces it) because EU citizens deserve better. While the Treaty includes some positive measures, these are outweighed by negative ones – the further militarisation of the EU, for example, as well as measures to promote greater liberalisation and privatisation. Worse, it squanders a perfect opportunity to put sustainability and climate security genuinely at the heart of the Union, and fails to bring the EU institutions closer to European citizens.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) If there was a competition for the best doctoral thesis on the Treaty of Lisbon, the text of the report by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs would deserve first prize and the highest praise.

The resolution is an excellent analysis and critique of the content of this completely incomprehensible Treaty. Anyone who dreaded the emergence of a centralised, almighty 'superstate' should be more than reassured. No substantial advances have been made compared with the contents of the Constitutional Treaty, but many things have been abandoned or withdrawn.

The co-rapporteurs note a lack of vision and ambition shown by national leaders in the European arena, and even downright mistrust of the EU and its institutions.

The eurosceptics should be pleased with the concessions: the delay of its entry into force, the retention of unanimity in 72 cases including taxation and the adoption of the multiannual financial framework, derogations, opt-ins and opt-outs, particularly for the UK, and the possibility of 'voluntary withdrawal' from the EU.

Those who deplore the 'concessions which are difficult for Parliament to accept' should take comfort on the one hand from the enhancement of the European Parliament's role as co-legislator and the sharing of its budgetary powers to give parity with the Council, and on the other from the fact that the principle of a double majority will make decision-making in the Council easier.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** – In this report on the Treaty of Lisbon we clearly see that the Treaty will bolster the democratic credentials of the EU. With greater involvement from both National and European Parliaments in decision-making procedures, we are giving the European people what they have always asked of the EU: a greater voice. The Treaty's focus on efficient and coherent policy-making, highlighted in the report, will give us the ability to face ever tougher global challenges. I voted in favour of this report and would like to congratulate the rapporteurs on what is an excellent report on a very sensitive and pivotal issue for the future of the Union.

**Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (NL) The hallmark of the draft Constitution voted down by two Member States in 2005 was that it responded to the desires of big business, national governments and the majority in national parliaments, but had little support among voters. The referendums in the few countries that held one revealed that intense public debate and high turnout lead to many dissenting votes. People do not want Europe imposing decisions on them that they themselves would never have wanted to take.

They do see Europe as useful in resolving cross-border problems peacefully and in tackling large-scale problems that individual Member States cannot solve alone, but they do not see the use of a Europe that increasingly takes the place of the country in which they live. The Constitution was a case of tied selling of good and bad things, without the opportunity to edit out the bad points in the fields of the economy and armament. The new Treaty still bears a strong resemblance to the Constitution. Rejection of referendums reflects fear of the electorate. The adoption of the amended Constitution by a clear majority today conveys a clear message: 'People keep out; this Europe is for professional politicians only'.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) The EU and its deeply unpopular Treaty cannot hide behind its demagogic claims to be more democratic and social. Imperialist infighting has been temporarily covered

up in order to launch an even greater onslaught on workers' rights and freedoms, and to stage an increase in monopoly profits.

The report on the Lisbon Treaty and the renamed European Constitution is a call for EC legislation to combat the opposition of workers in the Member States. The alliance of EU political supporters, including the New Democracy and PASOK parties, do not want referendums because they are aware of the opposition of the workers who suffer barbarous capitalism and imperialist aggression.

The Lisbon Treaty and the European Constitution strengthen the EU so that it can operate more efficiently and benefit European monopolies. As a result, the Lisbon Convention and the European Constitution:

- strengthen the unpopular arming of the EU,
- promote capitalist restructuring,
- develop new policies for exploiting workers and infringing their social rights,
- intensify the militarisation of the EU,
- adopt the dogma of preventive war,
- ratify imperialist interventions, even in Member States,
- restrict the sovereign rights of Member States,
- abolish the right of veto to the benefit of the stronger countries,
- boost and create new mechanisms of repression,
- further restrict individual rights and people's freedoms.

The workers of the EU have the power to condemn the European Treaty and the EU itself.

**Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) The Lisbon Treaty is a step backwards compared with the European Constitution. The former has jettisoned none of its neo-liberal cargo: there is absolutely no concept of democratic accountability at the European Central Bank, the Stability and Growth Pact is one-sided and the free market is championed.

At the request of Mr Brown and the Kaczyński brothers, the Lisbon Treaty has rejected certain positive symbols freely available to each state, such as flags and anthems. The binding nature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights has been distorted by an opt-out clause.

We have called for referendums to strengthen public dialogue and citizen participation. Refusing to hold referendums shows how much of a gap there is between the European elite and the hopes and needs of European citizens, and Euro-indifference and Euro-scepticism are strengthened.

We, the SYN (Coalition of the Left) and the Confederal Group of the European United Left / Nordic Green Left, say no to this Treaty: in our daily struggles we are clearing a different path for the EU. We want to be more part of Europe. The Europe we crave is politically more united; it has a stronger social and environmental policy, with a substantially increased Community budget, without relinquishing control over the ECB. Such a Europe is active and independent in its handling of the problems of world peace; it is not at the beck and call of President Bush.

**Tobias Pflüger (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (DE) The Lisbon Treaty will make a militaristic Europe possible.

Previous EC and EU treaties do not allow a permanent EU military budget, but the 'start-up fund' (Article 28 paragraph 3) now pays for operational EU military spending. In addition to the individual states' military budgets, it provides for the EU to have a military budget of its own. Article 28c paragraph 3 contains the much-criticised mutual aid and assistance obligation to be implemented via a European Defence Agency (Article 28). Institutional collaboration between the EU and NATO is stipulated in the Treaty (Article 28a paragraph 7).

The right of the Bundestag to decide whether the German Federal Army will be deployed in other countries is significantly undermined. The Reform Treaty allows for the formation of a military core Europe via 'permanent structured cooperation'. This creates a primary legislation framework for increased deployment of EU battle groups (Article 28, Protocol 4). The European Court of Justice is explicitly not competent

(Article 11, 240a). Nor is the European Parliament competent; it is merely kept up to date (Article 21). This releases future military intervention from democratic control.

This enabling of a militaristic Europe is accompanied by repressive partitioning off of the external borders. The new Article 62 of the Reform Treaty is designed to effect 'the gradual introduction of an integrated management system for external borders'.

Thanks to the undemocratic enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty by circumventing referendums, the codifying of neoliberal economic policies and the militaristic parts of the document, Europe is developing in completely the wrong direction.

**Bogusław Rogalski (UEN), in writing.** – (PL) I voted with profound conviction against the Lisbon Treaty, as it violates the principles of democracy. It is a treaty full of lies and contempt for the voice of the peoples of Europe. It is a treaty of euphemisms. Despite the rejection of the Constitution by the French and the Dutch, an expanded version is being introduced in a camouflaged fashion, playing with words and ignoring their votes.

The word 'Constitution' has been replaced by the word 'Treaty'. The EU President (*Prezydent*) is called the 'Przewodniczący', the Minister of Foreign Affairs the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. This is pure hypocrisy and is aimed at ushering in a new 'superstate' over the heads of the peoples. At its inception, the EU was about deep economic cooperation. I also voted against the report because this Parliament has rejected the potential to appeal to the supreme form of democracy: a referendum.

Such an important legal act, of constitutional rank, should be adopted in this particular form. The scandal is that this Parliament has rejected Amendment 32, obliging the result of a referendum in Ireland to be respected. Moreover, we have voted in a document that we are not yet familiar with, since there is still no printed consolidated text of the Treaty in the languages of the Member States.

This is controlled democracy, which ignores citizens and refuses to give them a right to vote. I do not wish to have anything to do with such a democracy, and President Pötering's derisive comments after the vote show that democracy in this Parliament, as in Europe, too, is dying.

**Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I strongly oppose this report.

From the outset I have expressed my opposition to the way the Treaty of Lisbon has been devised and ratified. In fact, I believe that a Treaty cannot simply be ratified by the national parliaments, but it needs a referendum.

Then, looking at the merits of the text itself, I totally disagree with some sections. In particular, in the third indent of paragraph 6, I utterly deplore the reference to Italy, though implicit. In fact, the text expresses regret about 'the extra parliamentary seat attributed to a Member State in derogation of the principle of degressive proportionality'. The truth is, this is all completely false. With this attribution, even if it comes in the form of an extra seat, discrimination orchestrated to harm Italy has been partially revived.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE), in writing.** – (SV) The Treaty of Lisbon is a crucial step in ensuring a more effective and better-functioning European Union. I therefore welcome the fact that, together in the European Parliament, we adopted the report on the Treaty of Lisbon. This means a clearer decision-making structure and more power for the EU's only popularly elected assembly, the European Parliament, a strengthened common foreign policy and new posts, such as the High Representative for Foreign Policy and the President of the European Council. The treaty means sweeping changes and I therefore support the proposal for a pan-European referendum, an interesting alternative to a Swedish referendum which I think is necessary to give the citizens the opportunity to express their opinion on matters which are of crucial importance for them.

**Brian Simpson (PSE), in writing.** – This is a very historic moment, the moment when the European Union attempts to drag itself into the 21st century. Many on the far right of this Parliament fear an effective European Union because it will diminish their ability to stoke up fear at a national level. Hence their almost hysterical demands on the one hand and total unacceptable behaviour on the other.

I congratulate our twin rapporteurs on their work. We must all remember that what we have here is a reform treaty and an amending treaty that will ensure that an EU of 27 can work effectively and, more importantly, work closely with the citizens of the European Union.

I will support this report in the hope that this will send a message not only to our citizens but to our member state Governments that this Parliament is serious in its desire to see a more accountable and more effective European Union.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing.** – I would like to add my support to Commissioner Wallström's point on ensuring that women are represented in the four senior posts in the EU. For too long these top EU posts have been seen as 'male, pale and stale'. We must move away from the perception of an 'all boys club' to a more representative grouping running the EU. Women deserve to be represented.

**Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), in writing.** – (PL) I am voting in favour of the report by Mr Corbett and Mr Méndez de Vigo on the Treaty of Lisbon.

The report correctly points out that the changes introduced by the new Treaty will make the principles by which the EU acts more democratic and more appropriate to the future development of the Community. One important element is the strengthening of the role of both the European Parliament and national parliaments, as well as the introduction of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It should also be pointed out that a more effective decision-making process has been introduced for EU institutions.

**Lars Wohlin (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (SV) The constitution should be rejected. We need a new constitution, not just a new name. A fundamental revision is needed which, like a constitution in the normal sense, limits and clarifies the powers of the European Court of Justice and the role of the EU. It is important to define which matters are of a supranational nature, i.e. matters such as free trade, climate change, the fight against international crime, terrorism, and integration. It is notable that in all these areas Britain has been a driving force throughout the development of the EU.

My view is that Sweden should demand the same exceptions Britain was given, both its opt-in and its opt-out clauses. There is no reason to treat Sweden any differently. Sweden's citizens have voted 'no' to the euro and it would only be reasonable for the next treaty to make clear that Sweden is not required to participate in monetary cooperation.

None of this can be found in the current proposal, which is why I have chosen to vote against the report.

#### **- Report: Ona Juknevičienė (A6-0471/2007)**

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) In the first place, we think it should be up to each country, in accordance with its practices, traditions and specific needs, to decide how to organise, collect and compile the relevant data, although we would acknowledge that sometimes it is necessary to have agreements in order to have comparable data and carry out comparable studies for various countries. In our opinion, however, the proposal for a regulation presented by the European Commission did not seem to us to offer due protection of confidentiality or to respect the various aspects entailed in the whole complex process of collecting such data.

In the debate in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs it was strongly argued that the proposal should be adopted at first reading, reflecting there too an eagerness to see all the conditions in place for the possible entry into force of the new Treaty.

Although we supported some of the proposals introduced during the parliamentary stage of work, we have our doubts about the results achieved on the basis of the agreement between Parliament's main political groups. That is why we abstained.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** – (SV) This report recommends that Member States' population and housing censuses be harmonised to a degree that is slightly absurd. In our view the Member States must decide independently whether they wish to register everything from the generational composition of private households to the distance from the place of usual residence to green spaces and recreation grounds. We consider that both the Council regulation and Parliament's report make excessively detailed and intrusive proposals. We have therefore voted against both on Parliament's amended proposal and in the final vote.

**Jens Holm and Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (SV) Today we voted on Ona Juknevičienė's report on population and housing censuses. We chose to vote against it in the final vote. The Member States are capable themselves of dealing with matters relating to population and housing censuses and this is an area in which the EU does not need to interfere.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – The accuracy and reliability of information on population and housing is essential for effective policies to be implemented at EU and national level. In the past, the inconsistencies arising between different Member States have rendered international comparisons difficult and so I welcome moves to clarify the issues involved. I have also been aware, however, that these issues raise questions regarding data protection and I acknowledge the hard work done in committee to address these concerns. I was accordingly able to support Amendment 71 and the report as a whole.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** – I welcome this proposal for a regulation on population and housing censuses. In formulating a common set of European guidelines that allow for Europe-wide comparison of statistics, we will improve the EU's ability to formulate legislation that is consistent with the changing needs of people around Europe. I voted in favour of the report.

**Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – I understand the need for adequate reliable statistics to be gathered for planning purposes. I also recognise that this report is a significant improvement on the Commission proposal.

However, I have a number of problems with the idea of the EU gathering statistics at this level of detail. Some questions are frankly not the concern of the EU. What possible relevance is people's marital status to the EU?

Also, while there are some guarantees concerning anonymity and data protection, I am concerned that they may not be strong enough, particularly in the light of recent very large-scale failures in data protection.

For these reasons I voted against the legislative resolution.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing.** – (DE) As we have experienced, cultural differences can escalate at any time. In this respect, we in Europe, especially in the larger urban agglomerations, are sitting on a powder keg that cannot be underestimated. In respect of the ethnically determined conflicts that flare up from time to time, it is therefore a good thing that the EU apparently wants to ask questions about ethnic background and religion at last, in an EU-wide census in 2011. Statistical data on the ethnic and cultural make-up of the resident population could assist the prevention of violence.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (PT) It is very important to have reliable data on population and housing in the European Union, since those data are of paramount importance for planning, administering and monitoring various policies, which frequently contain a European component. High quality annual population estimates are needed because they have implications for two fundamental axes of the European Union: the Union's democratic process, where the annual population estimates are used for the strict calculation of qualified majority voting in the Council, and also for the purposes of convergence of the Structural Funds, the main priority of the EU's cohesion policy, specifically in determining which regions are eligible.

I therefore think that this proposal is of considerable political importance insofar as it helps us to meet more precisely the criteria for democracy, development and cohesion in the European Union.

**Elisabeth Schroedter (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – (DE) It is a success for the Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance that the Commission proposal for this regulation was not simply passed through Parliament as a routine matter.

With our tenacity, we Greens have managed to ensure that this regulation guarantees protection where sensitive information is collected in the area of population and living situations. The voluntary annex, which provided for the collection of microdata and questions on extremely sensitive topics such as sexual behaviour and literacy, has been deleted entirely.

In addition, thanks to pressure from the Greens, the European Data Protection Supervisor was called in on two occasions. From his point of view, data protection has been taken into account sufficiently in the amended draft that is now before Parliament. For example, the regulation contains our amendment referring to the observation of data protection provisions both in the Member States and at EU level. Furthermore, there are now clear references to data protection provisions for data transmission and processing.

With this extra support to bolster it, the regulation now delivers what it was meant to – that is, not the collection of new data, but simply the standardisation of the collection of statistical data on the most important social and economic characteristics of regions that is already taking place at national level, in order to be able to make comparisons across Europe. The standardisation of European data will ensure that regional funding is effectively applied to those areas that are most in need of it.

**Lars Wohlin (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (SV) Explanation of vote concerning the proposal on population and housing censuses.

Today the European Parliament decided at first reading on the Commission proposal for a new regulation on population and housing censuses.

Good intentions lie behind the proposal, with a view to making it easier to compare population and housing census statistics. However, the final result is extremely far-reaching in terms of the information that is required. In its proposal the Commission stated that each Member State should collect information on its citizens, such as sexual orientation, dates of women's first marriage and current marriage, ethnicity, religion and number of children born alive.

It is very startling that our Commission is presenting a proposal that includes such intrusive questions and which in practice amounts to registration of citizens.

Today Parliament weeded out some of the most far-reaching questions. However, I chose to vote against the proposal in its entirety as it still goes too far.

#### **- Resolution on Lisbon Strategy (B6-0073/2008)**

**Giles Chichester (PPE-DE), in writing.** – British Conservatives have consistently supported the aims and the core policies of the Lisbon Strategy. In particular, we have highlighted the importance of a fully functioning single market in goods and services, creating a better business environment (especially for SMEs), stimulating innovation and introducing labour market reforms that focus on skills, flexibility and encouragement to create new jobs.

We have voted in favour, once again, of this annual motion for a resolution on the Lisbon Strategy to show our continued support for the underlying reform agenda. However, this does not imply that we support all of the detailed recommendations that have been included. In particular, we are absolutely against the additional social measures (except for pension portability) set out in the original version of Article 41.

We also reject the integration of transport into the Lisbon Treaty, as set out in Article 27, and we take the opportunity of reaffirming our strong view that, in the UK, this Treaty must be subject to ratification by the electorate through a referendum.

**Edite Estrela (PSE), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution on the Lisbon Strategy and the input to the Spring 2008 European Council, since I think that the renewed Lisbon Strategy enhances the ambitious objectives relating to European society as a whole, which seem essential for facing the opportunities and challenges of globalisation, demographic change, social imbalances, climate change, energy security, food security, economic growth and the integration of immigrants.

Strict implementation of the Lisbon Strategy will therefore be decisive for buttressing Europe's competitive position in the global market through job creation, poverty reduction and social inclusion.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) First of all, we regret that the motion for a resolution which we presented on the Lisbon Strategy was rejected, which is all the more serious just as we are embarking upon the final cycle of the Lisbon Strategy.

Once more the majority of the European Parliament is rejecting a change of policy and expressing its full support for and involvement in the policies followed to date: deregulation of markets and labour relations, liberalisation of goods and essential services (postal service, transport, telecommunications, energy, etc.) and handing them over to private operators, to the detriment of taxpayers, workers and the people.

As may be seen in Portugal, this distinctly neoliberal policy is increasingly spreading to other sectors. We are witnessing the growing commercialisation of health, education and training, exacerbating social inequalities and increasing poverty and social exclusion in the European Union.

Pressure is now also being applied to strengthen the external component of the Lisbon Strategy, that is, to impose on third countries, many of which are less developed, economic and political conditions requiring the *opening up* of those markets in the interests of the large European multinationals.

**Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (PL) The resolution on the Lisbon Strategy contains many important provisions for business people and consumers. One initiative that is particularly worthy of note and support is the Small Business Act initiative, which presents the philosophy of the 'think small first'

principle. I hope that this initiative will be implemented effectively and promptly, with the active involvement of interested parties. There is no need for me to remind you here of the significance of the role of small and medium-sized businesses in economic life, or how important it is for the future of Europe that they are granted a special and privileged status.

I would also like to draw attention to the protection of intellectual rights. We are all aware that, in comparison with the United States, Europe's patent system with its exceptional lack of cohesion is a big headache for some European countries clearly holding back innovation and research on a wide front, and that is harming the whole continent. It is therefore important to draw up joint proposals and solutions for the current situation so that all EU consumers might have the benefit of new and modern products at a price that matches the purchasing powers of the average consumer.

**Stanisław Jałowiecki (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (PL) I abstained from the vote on the resolution on the Lisbon agenda. I was somewhat surprised to read paragraph 3 in particular. From it we learn that in order to guarantee the success of this agenda, we also need to strengthen economic growth in Europe. It is about that one little word: also.

Up to now I was living in the conviction that growth was the main aim, and that the point was to catch up with certain countries and not let others catch up with us. Careful reading of the draft resolution indicates that unfortunately this is not just a routine oversight, but a confirmation of a rule. In this text we find statements that might successfully be placed in dozens of other resolutions. Often these are matters that undoubtedly put the brakes on such growth. What we have in effect is a wish list that we could draw up for ourselves on many other occasions, and not just when discussing the Lisbon agenda.

There is one exception, however: progress in the introduction of the Lisbon agenda. This fragment of the resolution is very important, but sadly the conclusions are not optimistic. We do not know how to measure this progress, if indeed there has been any. There is no appropriate monitoring. This means that our work lacks points of reference. We have problems with evaluation. We do not know whether we are forging ahead or standing on the spot. I think that we as a Parliament should be working on this above all.

**Othmar Karas (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (DE) On Monday, the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy gave the green light to the final acceptance of the statutory foundations for the EIT. That means that all the questions about financing and the EIT's internal organisation have been dealt with, and it is ready for launch.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology is a central component in achieving more for our economy, more for science and more for sustainable jobs in Europe. Therefore, it is essential that a decision on the location of the EIT be made quickly.

I call upon the EU Heads of State or Government to agree on a defined time frame for this decision at the Spring European Council. The decision must be made by the EU summit in June, at the latest. The Austrian Federal Chancellor, Mr Gusenbauer, must also be involved in setting the time frame, since Austria submitted a very appropriate application.

The time frame for this decision must be determined at the spring summit and form part of the summit outcome document. Given Vienna's excellent application to host the EIT, Chancellor Gusenbauer has considerable responsibility to ensure that the decision is made quickly and a precise time frame is set.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** – With the renewal of the Lisbon strategy I stress the need for a real update of the Integrated Policy Guidelines, along with a greater role for the European Parliament in monitoring how the strategy is followed up. The focus should be on achieving a socially sensitive Europe that deals with the current economic problems we face without isolating those most vulnerable. The need for enforcement of a minimum wage in all Member States is one of the key ways that we can ensure that all European citizens enjoy a decent basic standard of living. I am satisfied with the resolution and have voted in favour of it.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) The centre-right and centre-left political groupings are competing with each other over which can lend more support to the interests and choices of big business. They are even surpassing the Commission in promoting the anti-worker, anti-popular Lisbon Strategy.

This disgraceful resolution does not even shed crocodile tears over poverty or social exclusion. On the contrary, it demands that reforms be carried out in labour markets and social insurance systems; it emphasises the Commission's guidelines by requesting that the directives on the organization of working time and working conditions for temporary workers be adopted; it asks Member States to place EU competitiveness

at the core of their policies and to make the completion of the single market their most important economic and political priority.

According to the resolution, the most suitable tool for promoting these and other anti-worker measures and policies is class cooperation, which will succeed through a widening of social dialogue and the establishment of a climate of trust between enterprises and employees.

Employees have endured seven years of implementation of this strategy. As a result, their living standards, employment, pension and social rights have worsened. This is why they are rejecting the Lisbon Strategy and opposing the interests of capital. We feel the same about the EU, which is serving those interests.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT)** Although I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution by the majority of the parliamentary groups, since I agree with the constructive approach and the essence of the recommendations, in particular with regard to the need to boost investment in research, innovation and development and policies to promote knowledge, in the opening of markets and greater flexibility, with security, in labour markets, I still cannot help thinking that some of the data presented in the alternative resolution give cause for concern. That is precisely why I could not support the resolution of the Communist Group.

Two years away from the expiry of the Lisbon Agenda, we must acknowledge that the objectives outlined – ambitious objectives – are far from having been achieved (and our comparative speeding up in the face of the slow-down in the American economy is not a matter for celebration). I believe that it would therefore be better to finally acknowledge the need to follow the path outlined but not followed, rather than to try to make a final effort to achieve in two years what we did not manage to achieve in eight. The causes and circumstances that justified the measures contained in the Lisbon Agenda are still with us – if not more marked – so the correct route is outlined and we need actually to follow it.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE), in writing. – (SV)** A resolution on the Lisbon Strategy will inevitably be sprawling if all the matters of the heart are involved. This can also be seen in the final result. However, the report contains much that is important and necessary, which I was pleased to be able to support. Above all, this is true of the more adventurous parts which show that Parliament is moving with the times, such as environmental issues and the link to growth. The discussion on *flexicurity* which is now gathering speed also identifies the important – perhaps most important of all – question of how competition and security can be combined. As the report states, we are not building the future on protectionism and bureaucracy but on openness, access and good conditions for both workers and businesses.

However, I want to make clear that my vote in favour of Amendment 12 should not be interpreted in any way as support for establishing minimum wages in the EU. In contrast, it was a clarification that collective agreements have a place in the European model. I also made this clear today in Amendment 32 in the report on the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, which dealt specifically with that issue.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. –** The Lisbon Strategy is essential for the future success of the EU. It is vital that all Member States fulfil their commitment to make the EU the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE), in writing. – (RO)** The resolution regarding the Lisbon Strategy expresses the European Parliament's wish to ensure a decent living for all European citizens by creating new, better paid jobs and by increasing the investments in research, innovation and an information society.

Point 37 of the resolution emphasizes the importance of the transport policy for combating climate changes and requests that the Trans-European networks should be subject to an adequate assessment regarding their environmental impact.

I voted for amendment No. 12, as verbally amended by the Group of European Socialists, because in this way "Member States are invited to ensure the preconditions for the social and economic participation of all of them and, especially, to adopt regulations regarding the minimum wage, for instance, and other legal and mandatory arrangements for all or by collective contracts concluded according to national traditions, which would allow full-time workers to live decently from their income".

I voted for the resolution proposal with the conviction that the European Union is not only a common market, based on competition, but it should also be a social Europe in which every citizen is integrated into the economic and social activity and has a decent standard of living.



**Lars Wohlin (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) The Lisbon Strategy has now been in operation since 2000 and the Member States have not yet seen any clear results. The current proposal puts forward a new plan that extends to 2013.

I believe in institutional competition. There are aims in the Lisbon Strategy that are good and worth developing, such as the proposal for greater investment in research and development. The parts that address the 'social Europe', on the other hand, do not belong at EU level and it should be for the individual Member State to decide on these.

A further problem with the resolution is that it contains many vague provisions that allow the Commission to interpret and explain measures which we did not ask for.

My basic view is that the countries themselves should formulate a growth strategy as they choose in a democratic system. Some opt for a social democratic direction, others an extremely liberal, market-oriented approach. We must respect both. The main thing is that the decision must be taken at national level. I have therefore chosen to reject the proposal in its entirety.

**- Report: Margarita Starkevičiūtė (A6-0029/2008)**

**Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats have chosen to vote in favour of report 29/2008 in its entirety.

However, we voted against Amendment 32 tabled by the Green Group on the subject of minimum wages as a part of the European model.

We understand that the issue of minimum wages is important in many EU Member States.

However, we consider that each Member State must decide how the issue is dealt with.

In Sweden we deal with it best through collective agreements negotiated by the social partners.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Giving voice to the interests, aspirations and demands of major employers' organisations, the majority of this European Parliament is insisting on the Lisbon Strategy being fulfilled, in line with the European Commission's economic guidelines and with the deepening of the associated neoliberal policies.

Thus, even amid the threat of financial crisis and a halt to economic growth, they insist on wage restraint, limiting public spending and *modernising* public administration as the main axes to develop, together with removing obstacles to competition and to market access, in other words, the liberalisation of public services. All this accompanied by greater job insecurity, an insistence upon flexicurity and the *modernisation* of pension schemes, in other words, the devaluation and dismantling of the universal public social security system in the interests of private insurers.

To ensure that the Member States achieve such objectives, they are recommending greater control and pressure on those States, as if they had no share in the responsibility for adopting those guidelines. Whilst pretending not to realise what a profound effect such policies will have on the economic and social situation of the Member States, they continue to propound more of the same, which we roundly reject.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) We voted against this report that dictates to the Member States the content of their economic and social policies for the next three years.

This is the right moment to restate the extent to which everything, absolutely everything, beyond the single currency and the diktats it imposes on the Member States, is now decided in Brussels. It is no longer a matter simply of setting objectives for the Member States (reducing debt or public spending deficits, combating unemployment, reviving growth, and so on), but of explaining to them in detail what they should be doing, how to do it, and with what instruments.

The problem is that these guidelines have been the same for the last 15 years: employment flexibility, immigration to renew the population and provide cheap labour, deregulation of public services, wage restraint, Malthusian budgetary policies, liberalisation of external trade, competition, etc. This array is well known and so are its results: unemployment, lower spending power and increased poverty, de-industrialisation, social disintegration, etc. It is time for us to ask: is it because the Member States are not diligent enough in obeying orders that things are going badly, or rather because they are too diligent and the

orders are not the right ones? We believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that the second explanation is the correct one.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM)**, *in writing*. – (SV) This own-initiative report addresses several challenges faced by the future Europe, such as increased globalisation, an ageing population, and climate change. Many of the proposed measures appear reasonable and could be a possible path for a Member State to take.

The June List is opposed to complicated tax systems, social exclusion and environmental degradation. However, it is for each Member State itself to decide how to formulate its policy in order to meet the future challenges. The most successful solutions emerge through institutional competition, examples that can inspire and stimulate voluntary measures in other Member States.

We have chosen to vote against this report because it deals with areas for which the Member States have political responsibility.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – My group tabled a number of amendments on important issues such as climate change, fairer wealth distribution and fair pay, which I voted for.

**Janusz Lewandowski (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) In the seventh year of implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, the European Parliament's evaluation of the current situation in the European Union, takes into account the new conditions characterising the years 2007-2008. In the light of last year's and this year's experience, namely uncertainty and increased risk in financial markets, it makes sense to devote particular attention to the macro-economic stability of the Community.

Discipline in the euro area, and especially maintaining this discipline, is of major importance. Nonetheless, under the conditions of a deregulated, global financial system, the main responsibility falls upon the nation states, in the form of taking care to keep public finances in balance. This area leaves much to be desired, even in countries that think of themselves as the 'engines' of integration, particularly when they can count on a lenient tariff from the European Commission.

One demand that has gone unmet for some years is genuine liberalisation of the EU market, especially the services market, which would create a more genuine competitive pressure and would finally eliminate protective barriers, which no longer consist in regulations of statutory ranking, as more concealed ways have been found of making life difficult for foreign competitors.

The unfinished business of building an EU internal market means that the potential for enterprise and creativity in a Community of 27 countries is not being fully utilised. The costs of this shortfall are estimated at EUR 150 billion. These are sufficient reasons for the question of liberalisation of the common market to occupy a prominent position in reports evaluating the state of and growth prospects for the European economy.

**David Martin (PSE)**, *in writing*. – I welcome the report on the broad economic policy guidelines for 2008-2010. In the current economic climate, we must give the EU the necessary tools to help us weather the storm. In doing this, Europe must remain a social Europe that has well coordinated mechanisms for high-quality public spending, research and innovation and education. Climate change must also feature highly in the formation of Europe's economic priorities if we are to meet the ambitious targets that we have set ourselves.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Since the point at issue in this report is, specifically, the national implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, I really must present a more detailed assessment here of my concerns, as a Portuguese MEP, about my country's failure to achieve the Lisbon Strategy – either in terms of results or measures.

I realise that in many respects, the criticisms that could be levelled at Portugal are just the same as those that could and should be levelled at Europe as a whole. We are, however, a long way away from achieving – and according to certain criteria, such as employment, moving even further away from achieving – the Lisbon objectives, and we are nowhere near adopting the appropriate policies for obtaining those results. Balancing national public finances is a priority but that balance must be achieved by reducing waste and rejecting non-productive spending and by the fair distribution of income received.

It is not appropriate to achieve that by overburdening household budgets and reducing the effective obligations of the State. Just as in the private sector, competitiveness and success are obtained by providing better services at lower costs, but without cancelling either side of the equation.

**Luca Romagnoli (NI)**, *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mrs Starkevičiūtė's report. The current formulation of the guidelines constitutes a sufficiently broad and still valid framework to accommodate recent economic and political developments. Therefore, we agree with the proposal not to change the text of the broad guidelines for the economic policies in the next three-year cycle, in line with the Council's conclusions.

Stability is indeed important for the effectiveness of the Lisbon Strategy and the integrated guidelines. This new cycle should therefore hinge on the implementation of reform and the achievement of concrete results. We also support the proposals for amendments to the explanatory text that accompanies the broad guidelines for the economic policies because they give a better focus to the content of the guidelines, to meet the challenges Europe is facing (globalisation, strengthening the bases for economic growth in the medium and long term, rapid demographic and social change, etc.).

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) Today I voted in favour of a report which sets out the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs for 2008-2010. On the one hand, I was pleased to find amendments from the Socialist Group which noted the need to create a Europe that is favourable to business, not least to small enterprises.

On the other hand, the same group also proposed much stricter rules in the financial field, rules which are supposed to protect consumers, but which increasingly mean that earnings are reduced for them. This attitude is more likely to hinder than help and I have therefore voted against this proposal. If the European vision of being the leading global competitive force is ever to become reality, much more aggressive investments must also be made in modernising the labour market, in encouraging research and education, and in taking advantage of the possibilities offered by a 'greener' economy. I have therefore voted with the Greens, for environmental taxes at EU level, even though as usual I defended the independence of the European Central Bank against their recurrent attacks.

If there is anything that the recent financial turbulence has shown us, it is the benefit of a strong central bank that can withstand short-term solutions, not to mention the stabilising effect of participating in a large currency zone.

**Peter Skinner (PSE)**, *in writing*. – The British Labour delegation supports the main thrust of this report, as it attends to promoting generally-acceptable policies for the EU economy. However, the EPLP has severe reservations over paragraph 26, which calls for fiscal harmonisation/coordination, which is a national competence only. Therefore, the EPLP decided to abstain on this particular paragraph.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE)**, *in writing*. – On paragraph 26, the amendment refers to a common consolidated corporate tax base. I disagree with this point as I believe this should be decided by the Member State. I abstained on this point.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE)**, *in writing* – (RO) The European Parliament's Report on the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs examines the general lines proposed by the European Commission for the economic policies of the Member States and of the Community for the period of 2008-2010.

I voted for recital 26, as proposed by the Commission, because it emphasizes the need for a "coordinated fiscal framework, which should include a tax system favourable to companies, in particular to small and medium-sized companies, and geared to renewing economic growth and generating employment".

I also voted for amendment 23, because it "requests that the income and the way in which wealth is distributed should ensure the equitable distribution of the benefits generated by economic growth." The amendment states that the minimum wage in every country, according to the GDP per inhabitant, could be a way to guarantee the fact that the full-time workers can provide their subsistence from their work, which should be considered an element of the European social model.

Consequently, I voted for this report with the conviction that the economic security of all the European citizens, social inclusion, gender equality and the creation of a market economy will make the Union become an economic and social model in a global context.

**- Report: Cem Özdemir (A6-0503/2007)**

**Adam Bielan (UEN), in writing.** – (PL) I supported Mr Özdemir's report because one of the most pressing political problems facing Europe is ensuring energy security for the EU. Diversification of supplies of energy raw materials to the EU is one way of making ourselves independent of Russia, and the key move in this is a common EU policy with regard to Central Asia. The lack of a common EU policy in this sphere is being aggressively exploited by Russia, with most EU Member States taking a passive stance. Projects such as the extension of the Odessa-Brody pipeline to Gdańsk, or the Nabucco pipeline, are no longer very realistic as a result of the actions taken by Russian companies dominated by the special services.

**Bernadette Bourzai (PSE), in writing.** – (FR) I would like to congratulate Mr Özdemir on his own-initiative report on an EU strategy for Central Asia. In my view, he has clarified perfectly the objectives and priorities for the European Union's relations with each of the five Central Asian countries. He has correctly pointed out the need for a more coherent regional approach to this strategic region, while highlighting the differences between the countries.

I approve of the opinion of the Committee on Development, particularly on the need to eradicate poverty, improve public health and primary school education, and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and minorities.

It is also important that this report underlines the need for progress on democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in the region, and this point is key, as far as I am concerned.

The report considers that cooperation on energy is of prime importance in Europe's strategy. Despite this, the European institutions need to be vigilant and ensure that neither human rights in the region, nor the environment, are sacrificed to energy needs and trade agreements.

**Patrick Gaubert (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) I welcome the adoption by a large majority today of the report on an EU strategy for Central Asia. It is essential for the European Union to take a closer interest in these five countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

The report quite rightly calls for differentiation in the EU's policy towards each country and I cannot but approve the fact that criteria such as the human rights situation in the countries in question and their respect for OSCE commitments are highlighted.

The text is also keen to stress the importance of these countries for the EU, both now and in the future, particularly as regards trade and energy. The geopolitical situation of Central Asia is such that cooperation with these countries must be increased, both bilaterally and at EU level. The report calls for reforms of social sectors, health, food security and the fight against corruption to ensure long-term stability, security and prosperity in the region.

This is therefore a comprehensive text, defining the spheres of action in which the EU can be of assistance, to give it as much visibility and credibility in the region as possible.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) In line with what has been approved by the majority of the European Parliament on the EU's external relations, we have yet another report consisting essentially of a collection of measures for interfering in third countries, without concealing – quite the reverse – the clear objective of obtaining, within the economies of those countries, conditions favourable to the interests of the large economic and financial groups.

Look how the report stands up for *respecting international standards for foreign investment* and the provision of *better protection for foreign direct investment* in these countries. It is clear that such statements mean nothing more or less than to *privatise state banks(!) and create national financial markets that are truly competitive and open to foreign banks(!)* In other words, these countries are simply being put up for sale...

Moreover, in line with the objective mentioned above, the EU's primordial interests emerge as regards the *significant energy resources* of the countries in this region, and there is mention of the need to secure its energy supplies, without disturbing the transportation routes and with the maximum possible regularity.

Basically, it reflects the real significance of the much-proclaimed *role of the EU in the world*, in particular in the current proposed Treaty: its ambition to achieve political and economic domination.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – I wish to congratulate my colleague Mr Özdemir on his report on Central Asia, to which I gave my full backing. Democracy and human rights are founding principles of the

EU, and they should be at the heart of the EU's policy in relation to other regions. The nations of Central Asia have attracted attention from the world's economic powers primarily on account of their natural resources. The EU must rise above this and seek to invest in their human resources too, by advocating democracy and human rights.

**Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (CS)** What was the legacy of the Soviet Union in the countries of Central Asia? Equality for women, abolition of child labour and illiteracy, monoculture farming. In none of these countries have religious elements succeeded in establishing supremacy.

The EU's first priority is the use of the natural resources of those countries, namely oil, natural gas and uranium. Another priority is blocking one of the main channels of opium smuggling from Afghanistan. This brings us to the direct responsibility of the EU and the US for supporting the establishment of authoritarian regimes in the countries in that region. The individual countries try to limit the proliferation of terrorist groups and the spread of militant Islamic ideas, but such a situation has a negative effect on the development of civil society and participative democracy and tends to support the rule of force.

Notwithstanding all the criticism of the countries of the region in the report, we must always remember the difficult historical conditions faced by these countries in the course of their development. The EU must help them to overcome the results of many years of negativity created by the presence of the large EU states and the US in neighbouring Afghanistan.

There is no reason to favour Turkey as the main potential mediator for a positive influence in the region. The present situation as regards respect for the rights of minorities in Turkey certainly does not justify that approach. In contrast, much more attention should be paid to the traditional ties to Russia. When it comes to our fight against the spread of terrorism and drugs throughout the countries of that region, Russia is our closest ally.

In spite of the above-mentioned reservations, I support the adoption of the report.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE), in writing. – (DE)** I am voting in favour of the proposal for an EU strategy for Central Asia, since the five republics there receive Official Development Assistance and the European Union has a particular responsibility to support these countries. I would like to highlight the role of the European Union as a mediator between the countries of Central Asia, balancing out the significant differences between the five republics in terms of political, economic and social conditions. In particular, I would like to point out the dire situation in the area of health, which is attributable to the minimal medical care system.

Providing access to clean drinking water and connecting all residents to the national grid present a problem of huge magnitude in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. It is important to me that my vote for an EU strategy for Central Asia is also a vote to improve living conditions for the people of Central Asia with regard to social, health and legal aspects.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing. –** Mr Özdemir's report on the EU's strategy for Central Asia deals with a key issue on the EU's foreign policy agenda. I welcome its emphasis on attending to human rights in the Central Asian region; an emphasis that the EU should apply to its external relations more generally. There exists little evidence of democratic advancement in the region, notably Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and any EU strategy for cooperation should attempt to engage these states in a drive towards the concept of democracy. As the report clearly outlines, Central Asia requires active EU energy cooperation in a bid to find mutually beneficial solutions to the current state of play in the energy market. I agree with Mr Ozdemir's recommendations and voted in favour of the report.

**Véronique Mathieu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR)** With the exception of the Kyrgyz Republic, developments in the Central Asia region are alarming for more than one reason.

Firstly, in terms of human rights and democracy, the abuse of many women (forced marriages, sexual exploitation, rape, etc.) and child labour in the region are totally unacceptable.

Next, in terms of health, the increase in infectious diseases (particularly HIV) remains worrying.

Finally, Central Asia will not benefit from effective integration into the world economic system until all five countries in the area have joined the WTO (the Kyrgyz Republic has been a member since 1998).

The EU's strategy for Central Asia can make an effective contribution to the economic and human development of this region of the world. The European Union must not neglect Central Asia, which is a strategic crossroads between Europe and Asia and a traditional partner in trade relations and energy cooperation.

I strongly support this text in its desire to see the EU's priorities in Central Asia clarified, the European projects launched in the region strengthened and their implementation accelerated. That is why I voted for the report.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Strategic planning for Central Asia is certainly a good idea, and is indeed necessary, especially for economic cooperation and the opening up of the markets. It would also make sense to speed this up in order to keep abreast of developments.

However, the situation where certain standards that apply at European level become minimal in Central Asia cannot be allowed to continue. On the other hand, applying the same yardstick there as in Europe would be to show considerable arrogance towards the people groups named in the report and their rights to self-determination. As regards the role of women, there is sufficient need for action in other regions of the world, not least the entire Arab world, where the need is far more urgent.

However, child labour, which is widespread, especially in China, is covered by the standards I have already mentioned, which trading partners are required to observe.

Combating terrorism and the drug trade, which are linked to some extent, must be at the very top of the agenda. These must be fought relentlessly.

**Cristiana Muscardini (UEN)**, *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I support the document presented by the European Commission for a new partnership with the countries of Central Asia, but I would like to highlight the following aspects.

Firstly, the growing importance in international trade of Central Asia, which now constitutes an important alternative for the supply of energy resources.

Secondly, the fact that Europe must, as a result, keep a watchful eye on this part of the world, and encourage its integration into world trade and the international economic system by supporting the candidacy of those countries in the area that are not yet members of the WTO. Strengthening trade relations with the whole area should therefore be seen as part of a strategy to achieve greater cooperation and integration among the countries themselves and to increase Europe's influence, including political, in a region where progress has been made towards democracy.

Thirdly, in the overall approach towards Central Asia, account must be taken of the major political and economic differences between the countries of the region. Particular stress has been placed on the role played by a country such as Kazakhstan, which has an advanced economy, and therefore on the potential benefits of strengthening links with that country, not least in terms of the overall development of the whole region.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The European Union has tried to establish close relations and dialogue through its neighbourhood policy. In the case of Central Asia, the drawing up of the new strategy and partnership with five new States is helping to promote greater stability, socio-economic and democratic development and security throughout that part of Asia.

We note that there is a global interest in stability in Central Asia, since serious and prolonged crises in that region could have disastrous consequences and affect the EU and its Member States. In addition, the geopolitical situation of Central Asia has been attracting growing interest from economic powers such as Russia, the USA, China and Turkey.

I think that the future of those relations aiming at greater stability and security and increased political, economic and social cooperation, must also take into account the human rights situation in each country and the strengthening of trade relations and energy cooperation, as well as paying attention to development needs and the commitments undertaken as regards improving the living conditions of the citizens of the region.

## 6. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

*(The sitting was suspended at 13.10 and resumed at 15.00)*

**IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ***Vice-President***7. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes****8. Monitoring the application of Community law (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the report by Mrs Frassoni, on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs, on the Commission's 23rd Annual report on monitoring the application of Community law (2005)

(2006/2271(INI)) (A6-0462/2007).

**Monica Frassoni, rapporteur.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the application of Community law is a key part of the 'better lawmaking' agenda launched by the Barroso Commission. For some time it has been a kind of Cinderella, lost amidst the fashion for impact assessments and cutting costs.

Today the Commission has started to rectify this, partly due to the pressure applied by Parliament. This is a procedure that, for years, has in many cases just been a kind of bureaucratic grind, where one infringement follows another without much ado, but it remains an absolutely essential procedure.

The numbers speak very clearly. To date, around 2 518 infringement procedures have been initiated in the most diverse sectors, particularly the environment and the internal market. In addition to this there are the hundreds, thousands even, of petitions that the Parliament receives each year and that often refer to specific infringements of Community law, against which citizens feel helpless and therefore turn to Parliament.

The question is: what chance do they have of receiving satisfaction? The infringement procedure is described by Articles 226 and 228 of the Treaty, and therefore there is not much scope for creativity. The rules in force condemn us to slow, muddled procedures where the most effective measure – a fine – is rarely applied and only after a very long time, decades even.

However, a great deal, a very great deal, can be done and I thank the Commission for proposing in the last two years, and then last September in a specific communication, a series of measures that are analysed and evaluated in my report, and on which I would like to make a few comments.

First, however, allow me to make a point that I believe is crucial in this debate, because enforcing laws can be a very political matter and can be a wonderful tool for improving the credibility and visibility of the Community institutions.

I would like to mention two specific examples of somewhat different behaviour by the Commission: the waste crisis in Naples and the Via Baltica motorway in the Rospuda Valley in Poland.

The waste crisis in Naples was a direct consequence of infringements, occurring year after year, of practically all the Community rules on waste. Indeed, very many infringement procedures had been initiated against Italy over the years and the Court had ruled against Italy on many occasions. However, only now, years later, when the situation has become intolerable for everyone and impossible to hide, has the Commission decided to bang its fists on the table. The Commission's visits are being followed with great interest, and citizens crying out against illegal tipping are announcing on television that petitions are being sent to the European Parliament. I wonder: could this not have been done before? Could we really not have taken a different attitude to prevent this situation arising? Yes, we could!

This is actually what Commissioner Dimas did in the case of the Rospuda Valley in Poland, which was in danger of being spoiled by infrastructure for the Via Baltica. For the first time, the Commissioner asked for a suspension order from the Court, and this was granted. This is a very important precedent that sends an extremely clear message: the Commission can and must be firm and thorough with Member States that act as if nothing had happened, and it must use all the tools the democratic system allows: the media and public opinion.

One of the most important innovations that the Commission introduces in the communication concerns a 'new' working method. We have expressed many doubts about this new working method, which mostly consists of sending complaints directly back to the Member State against which the complaint is being made, in order to try to solve the problem. We expressed these doubts and the Commission gave us a few assurances that I hope we will also hear today, but we will be keeping a very close eye on the matter and truly hope that,

on the issue of infringement procedures, transparency, the ability to 'name and shame' Member States and the joint work with Parliament, will bring progress.

Mr President, at the end of the debate, I will speak again for two minutes to finish my speaking time.

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Thank you Mr President, ladies and gentlemen.

Mrs Frassoni, on behalf of the Council I would like to welcome your report on the Commission's annual report on monitoring the application of Community law, and the additional analysis envisaged in the Commission's communication 'A Europe of results - applying Community law'. In our opinion the report by the European Parliament is a very useful contribution to our common aim of securing the timely and correct application of Community law.

On behalf of the Council I would like to welcome the findings of Mrs Frassoni's report, which in our opinion are essential, namely that securing the positive effects of Community law on the everyday lives of the citizens of the European Union depends primarily on the efficiency of European Union policies and on the supervision and monitoring of the methods by which the Member States comply with Community law.

We have a positive opinion of the European Parliament's commitment to supporting the exchange of best practice among the Member States. In our view such exchanges would significantly contribute to a more efficient and unified application of Community law.

I must explain here that the Presidency of the Council cannot comment on most of the questions and proposals presented in this valuable report. As we know, the administrative implementation of Community law is principally the responsibility of the Member States in accordance with their constitutional regulations, and of the Commission, which, as the guardian of treaties, is responsible for monitoring the uniform application of Community law.

**Günter Verheugen**, *Member of the Commission*. – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, the Commission is grateful for the opportunity to discuss these important issues with the European Parliament today, and I am very grateful for Mrs Frassoni's report and contribution, which contains valuable points. I can assure you, Mrs Frassoni, that the Commission takes your points very seriously.

The European Union is a community under the rule of law and as such it is unique in the world. Only the law can guarantee the freedoms that citizens are entitled to and only the law can shape the market economy in such a way that it works to the benefit of all.

The European Commission is the guardian of the treaties. Its role is to ensure that Community law is being implemented everywhere and that it is correctly applied in each location. Even the best law has no value as long as it exists only on paper. Each committee will find, therefore, that one of its most important tasks is to ensure that our law does not consist merely of empty words.

In the treaty infringement proceedings and the European Court of Justice, we have a powerful weapon. This weapon must be used when there is no other way to remedy violation of the law. It is not an end in itself, however, and it could become blunt through excessive use.

The Commission does not believe that the number of treaty infringement proceedings is a measure of the seriousness and determination with which it monitors how well Community law is being observed. Rather, the Commission believes that it is a matter of finding solutions to problems. The real measure is how many problems relating to the application of Community law we have solved, and how quickly.

Indeed, we have critically reviewed the way we work and arrived at the following conclusions: once identified, problems must be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Citizens and business people are entitled to speedy answers. Therefore, Mrs Frassoni, I will go back to the Commission with what you said about rubbish in Campania and this topic will have to be discussed. I fully agree that a rigorous, fast and determined approach is absolutely essential where Community law is being blatantly ignored.

In principle, an approach based on partnership is preferable to a confrontational one. The Commission therefore wishes to see more dialogue and more transparency in these issues. We also want to set clear priorities: deal with important matters first, and quickly, and do not use a sledgehammer to break a nut. We must also make the necessary resources available.



Allow me to make one comment at this point. If problems mount up in relation to the application of Community law to particular matters, that may be because the law itself is unclear or contradictory. We should not assume from the outset that the Member States have a bad attitude.

As a consequence of these considerations, we took a series of steps and I would like to say from the outset that we will continue to have recourse to treaty infringement proceedings and institute them immediately when the necessary information is to hand. However, we are suggesting a new way of working, with which we hope to obtain the necessary information more quickly.

This method is based on improving cooperation with the Member States before it gets to the stage of instituting official proceedings, except, of course – and this is very important, Mrs Frassoni – in the event that it is obvious from the start that, in all probability, a treaty is being infringed. In such cases our first step is not to talk to the Member States, but to act.

It is not a totally new process, but a preliminary procedure in which we require additional procedures or in order to achieve a solution more quickly without instituting treaty infringement proceedings.

All enquiries and complaints are answered directly and speedily and, depending on the facts of the matter, can lead to treaty infringement proceedings. That means that every submission is registered and processed. If it is formulated as a complaint, or can be seen as a complaint, it is treated as a complaint and the Commission takes the appropriate steps.

We are currently testing this new method of working in a pilot phase. Fifteen Member States are involved in the pilot project, which has been designed to ensure that we do in fact make progress. Naturally, we will inform Parliament of the results of the pilot phase and discuss any further steps with Parliament.

All the same, we are already in a position to be able to find a solution to 90% of all problems that come to our attention without taking the matter to court. However, we do share your opinion that this should be done more quickly. A move to a monthly cycle of decision making, which commenced in January, should help. This ensures faster, more efficient execution of treaty infringement proceedings.

Certainly, we are striving to make the whole process as transparent as possible while preserving the appropriate measure of confidentiality, as required of us by the European Court of Justice. The public will have online access to regularly updated summaries of all treaty infringement proceedings currently before the court.

In the interests of transparency and legal certainty, we also need to know how the Member States are applying Community law in their respective national contexts. Therefore, we need correlation tables – as called for in the report – that clearly show implementation status in each Member State.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe we share the same goal. We want Community law in which EU citizens can have complete confidence.

**Diana Wallis**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Petitions*. – Mr President, in the minute I have on behalf of the Committee on Petitions, I would like to do three things. First of all, I would like to thank Ms Frassoni for her cooperation on this annual report, but, most of all, I would like to make clear the importance of the Petitions Committee in this monitoring and implementation procedure.

I think that importance has, at long last, been recognised by the Commission. I thank the Commissioner for that, because we should really have a partnership in this exercise between our two institutions, and particularly involving the Petitions Committee, which is really our eyes and ears, as legislators, through our citizens, who come to us with direct problems that they perceive.

But, in order for our citizens to be able to do that, I come to my second point. Commissioner, you talked about our law being living law. Well, in order for it to be living law, it needs to be understandable – comprehensible – to our citizens. I have had a long dialogue with your colleague Ms Wallström about citizens' summaries, so that citizens understand our law. She has, on many occasions, promised us that these will be forthcoming with every legislative instrument. We still await the real evidence of that happening.

Lastly, the Petitions Committee – and this I address to my own colleagues – needs much greater prominence and resources in our own House. It is not just an interfering busybody committee. It does a real job in connecting with our citizens in this area.

**Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (EL) Commissioner, you are absolutely right: the rule of law is the foundation of the EU. You correctly point out that Community legislation is the

way to achieve the goals of the EU treaties, as its byword is the interest of European citizens, who have the right to demand the implementation of this law.

The bulk, breadth and complexity of legislation are constantly on the increase. We MEPs from the European People's Party should like to express our satisfaction: through its 23rd annual report on monitoring the application of Community law and also through the announcement of the results in Europe, the Commission is demonstrating its desire to be the trustee of the treaties and to ensure that the legislation is implemented.

You are absolutely right in saying that we want the correlation tables, on which the Council made a decision today. The rapporteur cooperated extensively with you to draw up Mrs Frassoni's report, on which we had an interesting hearing in Parliament. Let us tell you that we also want Parliament to participate in the control procedure and wish to be kept informed about your activities. We want you to come to our committees, as you do to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. We wish to hear your progress report.

We certainly want you to take into consideration the petitions we receive, as you point out in your report. We should also like to stress that, as far as our decisions on immunities are concerned, we should like you to intervene to ensure that the national courts uphold them.

The implementation of Community law allows European citizens to hope that democracy, law and order will be strengthened, and that the EU authorities will become closer to them. Today, after the resolution on the new reformed Lisbon Treaty, we all wish for a better future for the EU.

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (PL) Mr President, one aim of Community legislation is the implementation of various EU political strategies. The application of this legislation should be a priority for all Member States which, while simultaneously subject to control and monitoring by the Commission, will guarantee that it has the desired positive outcomes for the citizens of Europe.

In past years the total number of proceedings dealing with violations of legal regulations instigated by the Commission was steadily rising, to reach a level of almost 2 700 in 2005. Despite EU enlargement by 10 new states, the years since then have not seen any overall rise in the number of violations. There is a danger, however, that this situation may have arisen from a lack of registrations of complaints, or from administrative problems in the institutions responsible for considering violations.

The report should be praised first and foremost in respect of its inclusion of detailed studies of instances of violations linked to petitions, as well as the information provided on the readiness for broad cooperation by individual Directorates General on such matters. We should also welcome the Commission's comprehensive communication 'A Europe of results – Applying Community law'. However, the questions of funds available for consideration of instances of violation, the length of proceedings in cases of violation, the restricted application of Article 228 of the Treaty and evaluation of the application of priority criteria still need to be fleshed out in more detail by the Commission.

The proposed new working method being introduced in 2008, as a pilot project involving several Member States and, aimed at conducting existing proceedings more efficiently, deserves acknowledgement. One stage of the procedure, however, namely the sending of a case to an interested Member State that is, above all, the party responsible for improper application of Community law, is a cause for concern: this may lead to a weakening of the role of warden of the treaties that rests with the Commission.

The creation of Community law should come to meet citizens' problems in such a way as to enable prompt answers to be found to their questions and complaints, which will make it easier for them to understand and make use of their rights, while at the same time effectively reducing the number of proceedings relating to violation of the law. Finally, may I warmly congratulate Mrs Frassoni on a very well-prepared document.

**Diana Wallis**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I would like to turn my attention to our three institutions and to emphasise how important it is that each one plays a part in the implementation and monitoring role.

Clearly, here, we are looking at the Commission's report. Of course, the Commission has the prime responsibility for implementation and enforcement, and we would not wish to tread on its toes in that respect. However, I think the Commission can assume that, in future, we will be watching much more carefully.

We are grateful that many of the lessons that were thrown up by our report on the demise of Equitable Life have been taken on board. But, as we move into a new period, and perhaps try out some new ideas, we have to be very careful.

First of all, if we look at the Council, we still have to get agreed – and I was pleased to hear the Commissioner mention it – the idea of correlation tables in respect of each and every piece of legislation, so that everybody can see exactly what happens at Member State level and where each piece of law fits in.

The pilot project is an excellent idea. That is all well and good, so let us see how it works out. But – and here is the but – I am a little sceptical that so many Member States have signed up to it. I hope they do not perceive it as some sort of soft option and I hope the Commission will disabuse them of the idea that could, in any way, be the case.

Lastly, I come to our own Parliament. Clearly, post-Lisbon Treaty, we must have a much more important role in terms of monitoring. We cannot assume that, once we finish with a piece of legislation here, that is the end of it. Our committees will have to take on a much bigger role in checking. One or two implementation reports are already happening – that will increase – and we will have to take on our responsibilities, along with the other institutions.

Just as a postscript – but a very important postscript – we also have to turn our attention to the education of our judiciary in our national courts to make sure that they, too, know how to implement Community law.

**Alyn Smith**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I congratulate my group colleague and group Co-President Mrs Frassoni for a timely and well thought-out report. I also echo Mrs Wallis's comments and agree with them absolutely.

Passing laws keeps us in business, but enforcing laws actually delivers for our people, and a failure to enforce laws, frankly, makes us look like fools. I congratulate the Commission on a number of steps that have been very positive. But we really must bring this closer to the top of our agenda in this Parliament because, certainly in Scotland, there remains a strong perception that there is one law for one country and one law for another. I am very aware that is not all the fault of the Commission, but we must all play our part in resolving that if we are one Europe.

So, in congratulating my group colleague, I am glad to hear that many of those points will be taken on board by the Commissioner. I would like to make one more point, particularly in relation to environmental legislation, where many of the conflicts arise: many of the very worthy aims of individual pieces of legislation do conflict, and we must face up to that in preparing them. There is scant guidance in terms of application for local authorities as to how they should deal with the often very worthy aims when they do conflict. We were promised a review of that in the energy package, so if our Commissioner could give us some light on that process, which is ongoing, I would be very grateful.

**Bert Doorn (PPE-DE)**. – (NL) Mr President, I, too, wish to compliment Mrs Frassoni on her report. We have now had a number of reports on implementation, and a distinct common thread can be seen in those reports. This means more attention to implementation, including on the part of the European Parliament. We now have recourse to implementation reports. In July I myself shall be presenting a report on the implementation of the eighth directive concerning the supervision of accountants. It is good that Parliament is also taking a serious look at the transposition of legislation in Member States.

I should like to focus on the issue of supervisors in this regard. We are talking about transposition by the authorities in the Member States and about the judges who apply the law. However, many Member States also have independent supervisors who apply and elaborate legislation. In practice, wide divergences have arisen among the various Member States and among supervisors. Increasingly often, businesses operating internationally in several Member States are being faced with differing requirements from different supervisors from different Member States. This is extremely inconvenient, and inhibits the operation of the internal market.

I should like to discuss one more point. We cannot, in addition, avoid a further examination of the legislative instruments used in Europe. Up to now, we have mainly been working with directives where harmonisation is concerned. Commissioner Verheugen has already said on certain occasions that in future it may make sense to make more use of the regulation instrument for internal market legislation, in order to avoid all kinds of problems such as cherry-picking and gold-plating during the transposition of directives. I know

that in the national parliaments too, particularly the Dutch Parliament, the realisation is slowly but surely sinking in that implementation involving gold-plating and cherry-picking can be detrimental to the operation of the internal market and also to the domestic economy. That being the case, the step towards a regulation, where possible, is no longer so very great.

**Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE).** – (ES) Mr President, we are aware of the importance of your mission to monitor the application of Community law. We are talking about relations between a supranational institution and national governments. National governments are strong entities, with a great deal of power, they are public authorities. Normally the Commission is the guardian of EU law and for citizens, in many cases, it is the only guarantee that they have that the law (because Community law is law) will be applied correctly.

The report by Mrs Frassoni is aimed at strengthening what I would call the backbone of the Commission, so that the Commission is aware of the importance of this task, and so that, even if we want a prior phase of negotiation with governments on the difficulties that may arise, at the moment of truth the Commission acts as the citizens expect, with strength and vigour, and applying Community law.

It is a concern that, following enlargement, we should have the impression that the Commission is applying less strict criteria to the new Member States than it applied to the old Members. This would have a negative impact on the consolidation of the European Union and on the reputation of the European Union itself in those Member States. Having followed many of the Commission's infringement proceedings, I can assure the Commission that, when it intervenes, citizens, and even the public authorities, feel strengthened by the action of the Commission in this area.

In other words, I think that the European Parliament report, the proposal put forward by Mrs Frassoni and also the opinion of Mrs Wallis are aimed at strengthening the Commission, so that the Commission does not consider itself to be alone and defenceless against the governments, but rather has the European Parliament to strengthen this role of overseeing and monitoring that the Commission has in relation to the application of Community law.

**Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE).** – (DA) Mr President, the citizens of Europe are decisively important for the EU's legislation. They are not simply sacrifices for the infringements, as in Naples for example. In many environmental issues they have often been key players. As guard dogs, they maintain a watch to ensure that the laws are implemented correctly in all corners of Europe, and in many cases they are the only ones to do this. Because of this, the EU should also support citizens by securing them a strong position. When they draw attention to infringements of Community legislation, their complaints should be handled seriously and with respect. I sincerely hope that this is not an attempt on the part of the Commission to put a stop to many of these complaints, as this would be bad practice. I would therefore like to thank Mrs Frassoni for drawing attention to these threats. Her excellent report will now become an important general step in the right direction. EU citizens will gain a stronger position through the Treaty of Lisbon, but if this is to be anything other than a pointless decoration, their contribution to the EU must be taken seriously.

**Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Mr President, I, too, would like to congratulate Mrs Frassoni on an excellently prepared report. I would also like to say how pleased I am that, according to the statistics presented by the European Commission concerning the number of proceedings relating to cases of violation of EU law, the accession of 10 new Member States has not had an impact on the number of violations recorded. The statistics do not, however, tell the whole story. One of the most important mechanisms enabling us to check how well the application of European law is really going is the system of pre-judicial references, the aim of which is to assign to national courts the potential to provide a uniform interpretation of the application of European law in all Member States. The fundamental problem in this procedure is the time one has to wait for an answer from the Court, which is still very long (about 20 months). The main reason – the time taken for translation – accounts for about nine months. It is a matter of concern that in many national parliaments we hear voices demanding a cap on the budget specifically for written translations.

The European Commission's recommendations for Member States and candidate countries are based on the assumption that EU law will be effectively introduced when suitably qualified staff are employed and suitable funds are set aside. I do not entirely support that view. The number of staff and the amount of funds available is not the right yardstick. Also needed are determination and involvement in the matter of introducing European law. Proper execution of the tasks facing Member States and candidate countries requires three factors: knowledge, competence and readiness. The first of these factors – that is, possession of knowledge – is not a problem today. The second factor – the capacity to introduce the Community's achievements – is linked to the provision of suitable funds and the engagement of additional employees. The Commission is

currently placing the greatest emphasis on this particular aspect. The third factor – the readiness of those whose task it is to introduce and apply European law – is the most underestimated.

Readiness to apply Community law in practice depends on the institutions and the system of procedures, incentives and restrictions. Success or failure in the introduction of EU law will eventually be decided by the specific institutional model. Knowledge and funds are not everything. A good will to act is also needed.

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President, in your introduction you pointed out that the Commission does not want to launch out blindly but sound out whether something should be done, by discussing it with the Member States. Now, within the Commission itself – which is, after all, a collegial institution – there is not always a clear, unified position on certain issues.

In the area of transport I currently see a topic that will become more and more problematic for us in the coming years – and probably within the Commission too – and that is the concept that money should be redirected to more environmentally friendly modes of transport by way of cross-subsidies from money that is earned in a less environmentally friendly area – road tolls, parking fees, etc. That is, in effect, a subsidy. Has there been any discussion about this, and how does the situation look?

**Katalin Lévai (PSE).** – (HU) Thank you, Mr President. As has already mentioned by several speakers before me, success in achieving the objectives set out in the Treaties and legislative acts will depend on how effective the Member States are in applying Community law, and on how they transpose it into the national setting.

If they fail to apply the legislation or enforce it properly, or are unable to comply fully with the goals it contains, then we will have a problem. In recent years the tendency has improved in terms of compliance with the legislation, and I think compliance by the ten new Member States is good. I hope that this is not just because the Commission is more lenient towards us, towards the new Member States, but because we are putting genuine effort into fulfilling criteria and meeting expectations.

Unfortunately, navigating the bureaucratic jungle is still far from easy; we know how enormous the number of legislative measures is, and transposing these into national and regional law is often exceedingly time-consuming. Enabling the simplification of bureaucratic language and more widespread use of impact assessments would be very important, as would ensuring that as little time as possible is taken up with conducting complaints procedures. Thank you.

**Wiesław Stefan Kuc (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, the implementation of Community law by individual Member States is one of the basic principles of the European Union. This is why monitoring and the elimination of deviations is the goal of numerous actions. Checking of individual states and publication of the results of the checks would make it possible for citizens to play a part in the introduction of EU legislation in states.

Meanwhile, it continues to be the case that Poland, for example, still applies national imposition of value-added tax, VAT, despite the Sixth Directive and court rulings. The same thing applies to double taxation on earned income. There are known cases of duty being applied to vehicles purchased by Polish citizens in EU countries, despite rulings by the Court of Justice, and of delays in refunding wrongly calculated charges that have been paid.

One particular oddity is that our citizens are held on remand for years on end without any sentence having been passed. The citizens of Poland are impatiently awaiting the European Commission's reaction to the examples provided and a curbing of the unlawful actions perpetrated by our government.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to Mrs Frassoni; it is just a pity that this report concerns a rather remote past, and it would have been nice if it had been about 2007.

**Jens-Peter Bonde (IND/DEM).** – (DA) Mr President, comitology is a study of how to limit democracy without the electorate realising. Firstly, power is transferred from the electorate and the popularly elected representatives to government officials and lobbyists behind closed doors in Brussels. Voting is then made subject to complicated rules that no-one can remember, no journalist can write about and no textbook author can explain. The essence of this is simply that the non-elected in the Commission will decide, unless a qualified majority can be established against the Commission. It is legislative power that is being turned into executive power; it is transparent legislation that is being turned into secret decrees; it is a majority democracy that is being turned into a minority government. It is not an absolute autocracy, but it is heading in that direction with a hint of Mussolini's corporate ideas.

With the new interinstitutional agreement, Parliament can put a matter back on the agenda, but only if the right and left wings of the House are in agreement and can produce an absolute majority of members in favour. Scrap the mixing of autocracy, however, and govern with shrewdness and corporatism! Introduce democracy in all legislation! As a fundamental principle, let us see that a majority of the popularly elected representatives are behind every law, either from national parliaments or here within the European Parliament! Legislation by government officials and lobbyists should be a thing of the past, yet it is unfortunately being cemented into place in the Treaty of Lisbon. It is therefore another good reason to make the Treaty the subject of a referendum.

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – On behalf of the Presidency I would like to stress in a concluding comment that the Presidency is aware of the fact that efficient monitoring of the application of Community law is essential if the law is to be universally respected and if the general legal principles on which the running of the Community is based are to be safeguarded.

Primarily, however, it is important for ensuring legal certainty among European citizens. It should not be forgotten that they have an important role in the implementation of Community law. This role is also reflected in the number of complaints made by citizens about infringements of Community law.

During the debate, which I followed very closely, several people were astonished that the number of infringements, or at least perceived infringements, has not increased since the enlargement of the European Union. Several speakers suspected that the Commission is not as strict with the so-called new Member States.

I must stress that the Presidency does not have any reason or evidence to support those doubts. However, there is at least one possible explanation I can offer. When it comes to the so-called new Member States, it must be taken into account that they became Members after many years of intensive transposition of Community law into their internal legal system, since when they have found it easier to continue the process on a smaller scale. This is just by way of a comment on the suspicion that the Commission is not equally strict with all the Member States, but I think it would be appropriate for the Commissioner to comment on this matter.

To finish, I would like to stress that the Presidency attaches great importance to the common responsibilities and aims defined in the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Lawmaking. Finally I would like to encourage all institutions and Member States to fulfil their obligations in the transposition and application of Community law.

**Günter Verheugen**, *Member of the Commission*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have already said that today's debate should not be without consequences, and I want to re-emphasise that. I will brief Mr Jung on the content of this debate and Parliament's input, and make suggestions too, as several very important suggestions have been made during this debate, which the Commission should take seriously.

Allow me to make another comment based on the philosophy of law: a community of nations under the rule of law is based on trust. It can function only if those who participate can trust each other. This is why, in a constitutional state, legal proceedings must take place in public and it is also the reason why I agree completely with what Mrs Wallis said. Information is vital here, and transparency is imperative.

There can be no policy of secrecy in applying and interpreting the law. Everything must be open and public. That is what I take from this debate, anyway, and I have always been convinced of it. I agree with what Mrs Wallis said about the role of the Committee on Petitions. As her customer, in a manner of speaking, I freely admit that this sometimes requires a great deal of work and effort, but citizens are entitled to expect us to make this effort. In addition, the petitions we receive teach us a great deal about how our citizens perceive our law and our policies.

Mrs Frassoni, Commissioner Wallström has already promised that, in future, we will create a citizens' summary. Since then, the Commission has also passed a formal resolution on this, so it is going to happen, and I am quite sure you will find ways and means of making very sure that we do it. It has been decided and it will happen.

Many Members have pondered the question of the new Member States and how it can be that, despite growth in the number of Members, there has been no growth in lawsuits for infringement of treaties.

The Commission has a very clear opinion on this, and that is that there are two reasons: firstly – and here I feel rather self-conscious, for I really ought to say that this is due to the good work of the previous Enlargement Commissioner – it has to do with the fact that the new Member States prepared so exactly for their *acquis*

that, at the time they joined, they met the requirements more precisely than the old Member States. I can only confirm this. It is the absolute truth. We would never have been able to conclude the accession treaties if the *acquis* had not been fulfilled.

The other reason is perhaps somewhat more practical, however: citizens of the new Member States need to learn, gradually, that they can complain, and how to do so. I therefore assume that the number of complaints will increase.

Mr Smith mentioned that the law must also be straightforward and applicable, particularly in regard to environmental legislation. As we know, the Commission is working on reviewing all Community law by the end of next year in order to ascertain where and how it can be simplified. Just a few days ago, as part of our presentation of progress on this 'Better Regulation' project, we promised that this whole process would indeed be completed by the end of next year.

Mr Medina, you do not need to worry that the Commission is sweeping complaints under the carpet. From my own experience of more than eight years as a member of the Commission, I can assure you that I have had to put the brakes on overzealous Commission departments far more often than I have needed to urge them to fire up the heavy artillery of the treaty infringement process. Far more frequently, I have to say to them: 'Hang on, just slow down, talk to them first and see if this can be resolved peaceably'. The risk of Commission departments tending to brush things under the carpet is almost nonexistent. I am certain that it does not happen.

As far as Mr Rack's question is concerned: decisions on treaty infringements, be it the lead-up or the conclusion or any individual step in between, require a formal decision by the College of Commissioners. That is how it is organised. I am unable here and now to answer your question about the specific problem of cross-subsidies, but I will make sure that you receive an answer before the end of this week.

Regarding Mr Kuc's remarks on the length of detention while awaiting trial, I admit that this would be a scandal if it occurred, but it is outside the jurisdiction of the European Union. The European Court of Human Rights is the competent court for such cases.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for all your suggestions and the constructive spirit of this debate. I am fairly sure that we will have made further progress when we discuss it again next year.

**Monica Frassoni**, *rapporteur*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank my fellow Members, the Commissioner and the Presidency for their participation in this discussion which, as Commissioner Verheugen said, does not end here.

Just a few points quickly. I would like to comment on the issue of defining priorities, which Commissioner Verheugen spoke about. I believe this could actually be a risky exercise. However, it has never really been done until now. I have always been rather sceptical about the possibility of really defining priorities. Anyway, if you really want to go along this route, take the risk of being transparent, and why not even debate these priorities? Otherwise the suspicion could take root that the priorities have been chosen because you want to get rid of the inconvenient infringements. I do not think this would be a good thing.

The second comment is that despite the fact that the Commission denies that it needs more resources, particularly human resources, to deal with infringements, the reality is that in almost all the meetings I have had with your fellow Commissioners, everyone has told me that they do not have sufficient resources, sufficient people, to deal with this matter.

In the debate the question came up of the number of infringements in the new Member States, and what the Commissioner and the Presidency said is probably true. However, we should also know that, for example, on environmental matters, there are only two or perhaps three officials dealing with all ten of the new Member States, so obviously there is certainly a human resources problem.

Lastly, the issue of Parliament's role. We are discussing internally various ways of making our role as co-legislators more effective, by following up the application of the directives we approve. I believe there are two things we absolutely must do: the first is decisively, through a political decision, to strengthen the role of the Committee on Petitions, which as Mrs Wallis said, is our window on the world; the second is that we should systematically organise application sessions, which do, however, require the open cooperation of the Commission. Because if we organise sessions where we discuss the application of directives and the Commission official who attends remains silent or tells us things that are of little interest – perhaps because he cannot say what we really want to know – then the whole exercise becomes pointless.

Anyway, thank you and we will undoubtedly speak about this again.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12 noon.

## 9. Kosovo (debate)

**President.** – The next item is certainly also tremendously important and topical. It is the Council and the Commission statements on Kosovo.

**Dimitrij Rupel, *President-in-Office of the Council.*** – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, if I think about it and overlook some of the detail, I must say that my generation and our younger colleagues have been quite lucky. We have lived the greater part of our lives, perhaps the best part, at a time when the doors and windows of opportunity have been open. That period started in 1975 with the Helsinki Final Act, and its consequences were most influential in eastern and central Europe, where the Berlin wall and the communist system collapsed in 1989. A new vision burst onto the scene over the collapsed wall and through the open doors and windows of the western façade of the Euroatlantic community. We saw the broad, sunny, dynamic landscape of a united and free Europe, beautifully symbolised by this immense European Parliament building. I could never imagine in my youth that one day I would speak in it.

In Slovenia we call the 1980s and early 1990s the Slovenian spring. Sadly, right at the start of the democratic awakening, we were hit by the Yugoslav crisis, which attempted to halt democratic development and caused the peoples of the western Balkans to fall way behind.

Most western and central European countries, and here I mean the ten new Members of the European Union, have taken up the historic challenge, but time has stood still in the Balkans. The General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), of which I am President, has, among other difficult tasks, that of putting the European perspective of the western Balkans into effect. This means involving countries such as Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania in the system of European memberships, candidatures and agreements.

The Yugoslav crisis will have to end. Doors and windows are open. The wall is no more. The European Union announced in the Thessaloniki Agenda that the western Balkan countries would sooner or later become members of the European Union. Now is the time for us to remember our commitments. We must endeavour to start negotiations with Macedonia, that is to say the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on membership of the European Union. Serbia must cast off the burdens of her past, namely the horrors and shadows of the Milošević regime. Milošević was the one responsible for the gridlock in the western Balkans. And we must not forget Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo.

The EU-Western Balkans forum which is to take place in Slovenia at the end of March will be very important in this context. In cooperation with the Slovenian Presidency, the Commission is preparing a special communication on the western Balkans. The forum will also consider strengthening regional cooperation in various areas, such as transport, civil protection, research and development, and so on.

In accordance with the January decisions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, the Commission is discussing visa liberalisation with all the countries of the region. We must not underestimate the exceptional importance that the gradual abolition of visas would have for this region. At the same time, Mr President, we would like to point out a peculiar paradox. Before 1990, the citizens of the former Yugoslavia travelled to most European countries without a visa. Now, however, a whole generation of young people who grew up after that year which was a turning point for Europe need a visa to travel.

Ladies and gentlemen, at our January meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, we unanimously invited Serbia to sign the political agreement constituting a new step towards membership of the European Union. After Mr Tadić, who is pro-European, won the elections, we were hopeful that, after many years of slow development and isolation, Serbia would join us as soon as possible.

The European Union has already sent a European security and defence policy mission to Kosovo. However, establishing relationships with Kosovo is a matter for each Member State. We will probably not differ in the fundamental assessments referred to at the December session of the European Council. The most important aspect is to have consideration and respect for Serbia. The European Union needs Serbia and Serbia needs the European Union. In my opinion, intercultural dialogue is not an empty phrase. Even if negotiations grind



to a halt, the possibilities for dialogue are not exhausted. Now is the time for practical dialogue between the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo, between Serbia and Kosovo, and between Serbia and the European Union.

The fate of Kosovo has burdened us for many years. In the past, Kosovo was part of the Yugoslav federal system and in 1974 was given practically the same status as the Yugoslav republics. Towards the end of the 1980s, Slobodan Milošević deprived Kosovo of its autonomy and in 1999 occupied it by military force, thereby causing a tragedy of global proportions.

The case of Kosovo is truly unique, because the international community had to take it under its protection for humanitarian reasons and then had to govern it for almost nine years. Nevertheless, Monday's decision by the General Affairs and External Relations Council was not easy. The decision and the declaration of independence in Priština were not unexpected. We were led to it by the following facts. Firstly, it was realised that a return to the previous position was not acceptable and nor was the present '*status quo*'. Neither side found a new formula to resolve the status of Kosovo, and it was obvious that further negotiations would not be fruitful. Since 1999 Kosovo has been administered by the United Nations and, during that time, in accordance with Resolution 1244, Serbia has not been able to exercise any effective authority. For a number of years prior to 1999 the majority of the population of Kosovo had been exposed to systematic repression, including ethnic cleansing and humanitarian disaster.

Ladies and gentlemen, all these facts, which were originally recognised by all the members of the contact group, including the Russian Federation, are evidence for the argument that Kosovo presents a really special case '*sui generis*', which is why the validity of the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity is not in doubt.

For some time the Council has been convinced that the European Union must take responsibility for Kosovo. This conviction was confirmed at the February session of GAERC in the decision we already know. Even though everyone had predicted disunity, we nevertheless achieved unity. After lengthy negotiation and harmonisation processes, the decisions were reached unanimously.

The European Union is an interesting and unique community. Of course we are linked by common interests and common values. Among them are respect and tolerance for differences. We could say that we are linked through our differences. At the end of the February session of the General Affairs and External Relations Council we adopted a common position. The important conclusion of the session was that, in respect of the recognition of Kosovo, we expected each Member State to act in accordance with its own national practice. Some may have expected the European Union as a whole to recognise Kosovo, but that is not possible because the European Union is not a state.

The European Union has adopted the common position on events in Kosovo and the western Balkans. Firstly, the European Union noted that Kosovo had adopted a resolution on independence. Secondly, the European Union took note that the resolution committed Kosovo to democratic principles, including the protection of the Serb minority and cultural heritage. Thirdly, the European Union reiterated its commitment to the international mission there and its readiness to play a leading role in the region. Fourthly, the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the European perspective for the western Balkans. Fifthly, the European Union would prepare specific economic measures for the wider region. And sixthly, the European Union is well aware of the principles of the international community, but considers that, due to its *sui generis* character, the case of Kosovo does not call these principles into question.

Of course, Kosovo also comprises Serbs and their heritage and culture, and I would like to stress that it is a particularly precious component of European culture.

Many European peoples, including the Slovenians whom I represent, have important monuments to their own culture and ethnic heritage which are now outside their own present-day state borders. This is a fact which does not create obstacles in contemporary Europe; on the contrary, it unites us. The same applies to minority ethnic groups.

In our opinion, it is essential that, with its reaction to the declaration and recognition of Kosovo's independence, Serbia does not close the door to the European Union. I repeat that the Kosovo question is separate from the question of Serbia's integration into Europe. Serbia must not link these two questions. In this sense we find it particularly difficult to understand Serbia's opposition to the European Union, that is to say to its mission in Kosovo, because this mission is primarily in the interest of Kosovo's Serbian population.

To conclude, the European Union is one of the most successful peacemaking organisations in the world. The peoples and countries of Europe are united and practise solidarity for the benefit of peace and a better

life. This attitude also encompasses tolerance and generosity and, above all, understanding and compassion when others are in distress.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the decision which I have mentioned, the European Union has opened its doors and windows not only to Serbia, but also to Kosovo.

### IN THE CHAIR: MR MAURO

*Vice-President*

**Olli Rehn**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, recalling our excellent cooperation on the Western Balkans, I want to thank you for the opportunity to inform Parliament on the Commission's standpoint on the Kosovo status process.

Kosovo's Assembly declared independence last Sunday in a climate of dignity. In its declaration, Kosovo committed itself to fully respecting extensive rights for Kosovo Serbs, especially with regard to local self-government in education, culture and health, in line with the comprehensive proposal presented by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

Celebrations in Kosovo took place in a joyful but responsible manner. However, there have been acts of violence in Belgrade and North Kosovo. We condemn the use of violence and call on all leaders and people of the region to remain calm and maintain peace and stability.

As Foreign Minister Rupel explained, the EU Foreign Ministers on Monday responded to developments in a united way. European unity is indeed essential to enable the European Union to successfully steer the ongoing stabilisation in the Western Balkans and to help bring the Kosovo status process to a conclusion.

After the prolonged talks in the United Nations Security Council failed, the European Union was bound to steer the process to a conclusion. The Union has already taken the essential decisions to send an ESDP rule of law mission to Kosovo.

On Monday, the Council also provided a platform for dealing with recognition. It will be up to each EU Member State individually to establish relations with Kosovo in accordance with its national procedures. Several Member States have already recognised Kosovo. I expect most of the others to follow suit, at their own pace.

The Council rightly reiterated the EU's adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the CSCE Helsinki Final Act and to all UN Security Council resolutions. It underlined that 'in view of the conflict of the 1990s and the extended period of international administration, Kosovo constitutes a sui generis case which does not call into question these principles'. The Commission fully shares this position.

In line with Monday's Council conclusions, the Commission stands ready to provide its full support to the EU's effort in Kosovo. This must be the hour of European unity also between the institutions.

By using Community instruments, the Commission will support institution-building in Kosovo and foster its political and economic development. On 5 March, we shall propose concrete measures for the broader region in order to advance its European aspirations.

In Kosovo, many areas are in need of development, and we must strive together to help Kosovo to help itself, to stand on its own feet as quickly as possible. In this context the Commission is working on organising a Donors' Conference that should help alleviate the most pressing financial challenges concerning Kosovo. I expect the Conference to take place before the summer.

I know this is a difficult moment for Serbia. I am very conscious of Kosovo's historical importance for the Serbian people. However, I find that the time has come to turn the page on the past, and to look to the future. And Serbia's future is in Europe. Serbia and the whole region of the Western Balkans have a European perspective, with the ultimate goal of EU membership. This EU perspective functions as the glue that keeps the countries of the region on a peaceful and reformist track, which is extremely important in these sensitive and difficult times.

Finally, I want to reiterate my appreciation for the unwavering support of the European Parliament for the EU perspective of the Western Balkans. We count on your continuous support, so that the citizens of the region can fulfil their aspiration of becoming, one day, part of the European Union.

(Applause)

**Doris Pack**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, Kosovo's independence has been declared; Kosovo is a state. Anyone who experienced the situation in Kosovo between 1989 and 1999 must have known that this independence was inevitable. The long-time pacifist president and winner of our Sakharov Prize, the late Ibrahim Rugova, would be very pleased to hear of it. Unfortunately, it was not possible to negotiate a solution. I am sure that every one of us would have dearly loved to be part of one. The current solution brings to mind a modified version of Churchill's aphorism: this is the worst option, except for all the others.

On Sunday I watched – half joyful, half tearful – as events unfolded in Priština. Half joyful because I believe this was the only way out of the stalemate; half tearful because I am certain that we have created problems for ourselves that will not be easy to solve.

Nevertheless, the EU has been firm, even though the press has frequently painted a picture of disunity. The EULEX mission was launched unanimously. It is not an attack on Serbia; rather, it is necessary, including for the Serbs in Kosovo, because it will keep a close eye on implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, which this Parliament passed by a two-thirds majority in spring 2007. This plan guarantees extremely generous minority rights for the Serbs, respect for the borders and the rule of law, and therefore also the protection of other minorities.

Politicians in Kosovo must now create their state with sound judgment and determination. The battle against unemployment can be won only by a functioning constitutional state. Radical measures to deal with crime are an equally high priority. The EU mission will support them in this, where possible. Kosovo has a large number of well-educated young people who will be delighted to help establish the new state.

Kosovo is not a test case. It is unique. Its development into a state is the final stage in the downfall of Yugoslavia, initiated by Milošević in Kosovo in 1989. I therefore regret the fact that Milošević did not live to see it, but his democratic successors must take on this onerous inheritance. We wish the Serbian politicians composure, and hope that they will now devote all their energy to taking Serbia along the path to EU membership.

(Applause from the right)

**Jan Marinus Wiersma**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, the House will understand that our group, too, has held a detailed discussion on the situation that has now arisen with regard to Kosovo. The most important conclusion was actually that, whilst we have to accept the reality, there is no cause for celebration, as we are now faced with an extremely complicated situation, including in view of the reactions from Serbia. After what happened under Milošević, however, and also after years of negotiations to find a solution, what has now happened was unavoidable.

We should like to focus in particular on the role of the European Union. The recognition of Kosovo is a matter for the Member States, as Mr Rupel and Commissioner Rehn also emphasised. We do need to act, however. We bear joint responsibility for stability in the region and also in Kosovo, and therefore our group lends its political support to the ESDP mission for which the Union has now given the starting signal. Of course, we also require the Kosovo authorities to implement the Ahtisaari proposals, to make genuine investment in a multiethnic state and to put in place sufficient guarantees for Serbians living in Kosovo.

Finally, on the subject of Serbia itself, everyone is, of course, very uncomfortable with the situation there. We have just had the opportunity to listen to the Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Committee on Foreign Affairs. He gave a hard-as-nails reaction to events, making an attack on Europe, particularly the countries that have now recognised Kosovo. I have another question: what can we do to prevent Serbia being isolated by others and also by itself in this situation? I was disheartened by his reply, as everything he said focused on the issue of Kosovo. However, I think that we must continue to make strenuous efforts to offer Serbia a European perspective, including for the sake of its people, complete with a specific offer concerning, for example, visa facilitation and further visa liberalisation. We must also place particular focus on the younger generation, which recently demonstrated in favour of movement towards the European Union, of a European future. I commend the Serbian Government on its repeated commitment to refrain from the use of violence. I am also assuming that it will refrain from imposing any economic sanctions on Kosovo. What we can do, and what the European Parliament has the responsibility to do, is to continue to invest in a European perspective for the whole region, and also apply this to Serbia.

**Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, every country created by breaking away from an existing country damages the territorial integrity of the original country and unilaterally alters the international legal order. My country is one such example: it was created in 1830 by breaking away from the state created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. Belgium's existence was recognised very quickly by the London Conference, which was attended by the United Kingdom, Prussia, Russia, Austria and France, but the Netherlands, from whom we had broken away, waited nine years before recognising Belgium.

I should actually have liked to tell the Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs this if he had wanted to hear it. This was not the case, however, as he repeated the familiar Serbian position *ad nauseam* without even a glimmer of an appreciation that opposing points of view also existed. The only chink of light was his clear statement that Serbia would not use any form of violence, blackmail or intimidation whatsoever.

We must all now concern ourselves with the future – the future of Serbia, of Kosovo, of the whole region. The European Union has already spent EUR 3 billion on Kosovo to date. A further EUR 200 million is to be added to this for the coming 16 months, but that will not suffice.

With regard to Serbia and all the other Western Balkan countries, we must attend to visa facilitation as a matter of urgency, so that relations between the citizens of those countries and the citizens of our countries can be normalised.

**Konrad Szymański**, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Mr President, in recognising Kosovo's independence, we have taken a huge responsibility upon ourselves; a responsibility for maintaining peace and for the construction of sound state institutions in Kosovo. There is no scenario that would enable international forces to be promptly withdrawn. Any solution, either leaving Kosovo in Serbia or showing support for its independence, brings with it a risk of conflict and ethnic tensions.

The Serbs must realise, however, that there is no way back to the situation as it stood prior to 1999. Destabilisation attempts are merely bringing them losses. There is only one way for Serbia to gain support for its claims in the sphere of cultural and social rights, and that is through constructive cooperation in the region. The failure of Kosovan independence will mean a return to the idea of a Greater Albania and inevitable war. Such a war will bring political losses that will primarily affect Serbia. This is why that state is responsible for avoiding this scenario and for stabilisation in the region.

**Joost Lagendijk**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, I am pleased that I was present in Priština last Sunday, when, in a truly dignified fashion, independence was proclaimed. What happened there last Sunday was the inevitable consequence of what happened in 1998–99, when more than 10 000 Kosovars were murdered and hundreds of thousands forced to flee. Could Priština have gone back to administration by Belgrade? No. Was muddling along after nine years of an increasingly illegitimate, increasingly ineffective UN administration an option? No. Would a negotiated compromise between Priština and Belgrade have been better? Yes. Would approval by the Security Council have been better? Yes. Was it attempted? Yes. Was there any chance of success? No, particularly as a result of Russian obstruction.

I very much hope that, following the euphoria of the last few days, the Kosovars will shoulder their responsibility quickly, as it is they who are at the helm. When the UN has gone, and when the EU mission has arrived, it is the Kosovars who must prove that good relations with minorities do not exist on paper alone, and that they are able to save the economy. It is true that the EU is now divided on the issue of recognition. This will last a few more months and then it will be over and done with. What the EU Member States agree on unanimously is that the future of Kosovo lies in the EU. The tempo of Kosovo's movement towards the EU will also depend on Serbia's position, however.

We have just seen in the Committee on Foreign Affairs how angry Serbia is, how angry the Minister for Foreign Affairs is, how aggressive his attitude was. That will be a while in changing. To be frank, I can appreciate this, provided such opposition remains non-violent. When the anger has subsided, I very much hope that good sense will prevail. It is true that the secession of Kosovo was inevitable. It is true that the future of Serbia lies just as inevitably in the European Union. To achieve this it is sometimes necessary to surpass oneself. I wish the Kosovars and the Serbs great courage in this.

**Francis Wurtz**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, it is difficult not to feel very uneasy about the responsibilities taken on by the European Union and its Member States in the Kosovo affair.

Firstly, in principle the EU aims to contribute to better world governance. Yet under its impetus, several Member States have weakened or are about to weaken dangerously the future credibility of international law through their support for the unilateral declaration of independence by a province of a sovereign state, a member of the UN. Whatever is said about the *sui generis* – because that is not decreed – the EU's major powers thus place power relations above the law, and in doing so open a Pandora's box. This is serious.

Next, this unilateral recognition is in serious danger of going against the EU's stated objectives in the Balkans. It will fuel nationalism rather than stemming its sources. Furthermore, the EU has just deeply alienated the Serbian people, without whom any regional policy in that part of Europe is impossible. As it happens I am not talking about those who would like to have Milošević back, but those who opposed him and are now in the majority. As for the Kosovo Albanians themselves, will the EU be able to satisfy their expectations after fuelling them? It is a question worth asking, hence the third reason for the unease felt after this day of jubilation in Kosovo.

The new challenge the European Union has just given itself is quite breathtaking. Here we are in the front line, heading towards a new protectorate, even though no satisfactory analysis has been produced of the reasons for the failure of the previous protectorate: Kosovo's gross domestic product is equivalent to that of Rwanda, half of its active population is unemployed, there are more than 200 000 refugees and displaced people, and violence against minorities is on the increase, despite EUR 2 billion of international aid and the presence of 17 000 NATO troops. It will not be EULEX that sorts out all these problems.

What comprehensive lasting prospect is the European Union able to offer to the Kosovars and to the other peoples of the Balkans – a prospect that can stabilise the situation here without the risk of destabilising it elsewhere? Membership? Within what timescale? Under what conditions? With what degree of probability that the necessary unanimous agreement of the 27 Member States will be secured? Nobody knows.

Clearly, my group cannot associate itself with the short-term self-satisfaction of the principal European leaders.

(Applause)

**Bastiaan Belder**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – (NL) Mr President, the EU Special Representative in Kosovo and intended International Civilian Representative, my compatriot Pieter Feith, gave an inspiring interview in the Dutch press on the difficult task that lies ahead of him in Kosovo Polje.

I found one passage in this interview puzzling, however. To the straightforward question of which of the external actors was in charge in Kosovo – the French ex-general Yves de Kermabon, who is to lead the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, or himself – Mr Feith replied, 'In political matters, I advise the French commander.' As the Council, in turn, is Mr Feith's superior, I would ask Mr Rupel of that institution how exactly decision making is now taking place in Kosovo. What is the situation with regard to international power relationships? This is all very important for the future.

By way of conclusion, I should like to relay a disturbing quote from a Kosovo police officer: 'Serbs and Albanians have managed to come to terms with each other at criminal level. Serbian and Albanian mafia organisations are cooperating excellently, and have been doing so for years.' I sincerely hope that, thanks to the European mission in Kosovo, this immoral Albanian-Serbian cooperation will have to give way to decent inter-ethnic coexistence, as that and that alone will open up the European future we are happy to wish upon Kosovo.

**Slavi Binev (NI)**. – (BG) Mr. Chairman, Colleagues, The Members of the European Parliament from Ataka Dimitar Stoyanov, Desislav Chukolov and myself, Slavi Binev, declare our firm disagreement with the independence of Kosovo announced on 17 February 2008. This unilateral secessionist act is an impermissible precedent in international relations. In our capacity of MEPs, we believe that the Kosovo Regional Assembly has no powers to adopt an act of independence and therefore we consider the separatist government consisting of proven drug traffickers and war criminals to be illegitimate.

The recognition of the independence of Kosovo by the individual Member States or the European Union as a whole would be tantamount to amnesty for the leaders of the Albanian terrorists who have pursued ethnic cleansing against all non-Albanian communities in the region for the last few years. We express our great disgust and indignation that the ethnic cleansing and destruction of hundreds of Medieval Orthodox churches in Metochia, Kosovo, have taken place before the eyes of the international security forces of NATO and the United Nations. Keeping in mind the crimes committed, we firmly renounce the artificial establishment of

a new Muslim state whose sole objective is to serve as a springboard for the trafficking in weapons, drugs and people towards Western Europe.

Being representatives of the Bulgarian people in the EU, we call upon its institutions to refrain from recognising Kosovo as an independent state and to abide by the existing resolutions of the UN Security Council instead. Furthermore, we call upon the Security Council to undertake decisive action to preserve the status quo and to overcome the secessionist tendencies in the name of the political stability of the Balkan Peninsula.

**José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE-DE).** – (ES) Mr President, the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 18 February will not go down in the history of the EU as a particularly glorious date. Rather than seeking a solution between the 27, the hot potato of the decision on recognition has been referred to the Member States.

It is always frustrating that, each time we have to make a decision about a sensitive matter at the heart of our continent that affects important principles such as the inviolability of borders, we are not able to speak with one voice. To complicate matters, the Council conclusions refer to international legality.

It is true that Parliament, like other EU bodies, adopted the Ahtisaari plan, but not as a blank cheque, rather on the understanding that the plan would have the approval of the United Nations Security Council. Obviously this was not the case, and various conclusions need to be drawn from this. The first is that it has been said that this case will not set a precedent, that it is a *sui generis* case, as Mr Wurtz said in his speech.

We need to ask ourselves whether or not we are a Community based on law. We cannot be so on an à la carte basis. Obviously this case is going to set a precedent and when international law is flouted it does not come for free and unfortunately there will be consequences.

Secondly, Mr President, how long are we going to be living with a United Nations Security Council in which there is an anachronistic right of veto for the winners of the Second World War enshrined in the San Francisco Charter in 1945? This is no way to construct an international order or implement fair and effective multilateralism.

Thirdly, Mr President, either the European Union learns once and for all that union is our strength and fragmentation is our weakness, or we will have to renounce our vocation of international leadership in this globalised world and confine ourselves to being what *The Economist* described us as: the 21st century's most prosperous third world region.

**Hannes Swoboda (PSE).** – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I understand the Kosovo Albanians' rejoicing and delight at the freedom and independence they have gained. At the same time, however, I understand the consternation and grief of many Serbs in Kosovo, and of course also in Serbia itself. Unfortunately, no other mutually agreed solution was found. The Milošević regime achieved anything but the integration of the population and the promotion of respect for Kosovo's Albanian citizens.

I therefore welcome the European Union's decision to create EULEX. I would like to take this opportunity to extend heartfelt thanks to Mr Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for the way in which he tried to achieve agreement in the Council in this difficult situation. This is very positive and should be pointed out clearly. However, even all the assistance that will now come from Europe is of no use at all unless Kosovo itself gains the commitment of the majority to create a multi-ethnic society in the European sense.

Much of what I have seen in recent days, including the behaviour of Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, encourages me and prompts me to hope that this multi-ethnic society is firmly seated in the minds of those responsible for the country.

We will see some demonstrations in the coming days, particularly in Serbia. We should exercise patience. We should extend a hand to Serbia. We ought to understand that there is a kind of collective sense of loss at work here, and most of all, we should stress what Mr Jeremić said today in the Parliamentary committee regarding the renouncing of violence and boycotts. That is a fundamental element and also the basis of further discussions with Serbia. We want to accompany Serbia on the road to joining the European Union. However, that is a decision to be made in Belgrade. It is not for us to make that decision for Serbia.

I am well aware of the situation in Kosovo. Many people coexist there. Perhaps they are set against each other right now but I believe that it is possible for them to stand together, to work with one another. This mutuality must be the goal of our policies, including here in the European Union and the European Parliament.

(Applause)

**Jelko Kacin (ALDE).** – (SL) Mr President, Commissioner, Minister, the situation in Kosovo is quite peaceful, in a way even exemplary and promising, except in the north where the Serbs live. Individual Serbs are committing acts of arson and that is not right. The declaration of independence in the Kosovo Assembly was dignified, respectful of all the peoples who live in the region, and in the spirit which should govern the future. The citizens of Kosovo have deserved our trust; we must have faith in them because they are making decisions about their future. They sincerely wish for their future soon to be a future in Europe.

As rapporteur for Serbia I welcome the considered conduct of Serbia, which did not introduce economic sanctions against Kosovo. At this emotional time for Serbia, I have some understanding for the harsh and threatening rhetoric of some politicians. However, their action should be reasonable and reflect European values. This independent status should enable Kosovo to gain access to the resources of the International Monetary Fund and to foreign investment for further development.

It is important to strengthen trade links between Kosovo and Serbia in order to stimulate economic growth and contribute to European integration. Only states may be members of the European Union and Kosovo has become a state.

Now the Serbs in Kosovo also have a European perspective. Serbia, too, should go ahead as soon as possible and make renewed and intensified efforts regarding its European perspective. Government working groups must now work even harder. They should prepare the next steps for Serbia, its economy and its citizens to get closer to the European Union, which is what the citizens desire so much. Attacking the Embassies of the Member States of the European Union in Belgrade cannot be the way into the European Union, and this was not what the majority of Serbs wanted.

Now that the Serbian ambassadors to the countries which have recognised Kosovo are temporarily returning home, their representatives should endeavour more actively to explain the steps Serbia is taking on the road to the European Union. There is no turning back; the only road to the future is the road to the European Union.

My concluding words are directed at Minister Samardžić. Arson is illegal everywhere. Too many villages have been burnt down in the Balkans in the past decade. Serbs in Kosovo should be allowed to get involved and to participate in decision-making in the new, independent country. I am hoping that Belgrade will issue a clear call for participation. That is what both Serbs and Albanians have deserved. That is what the whole of the western Balkans and the European Union need and have deserved.

**Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo has confronted the international community, and particularly the European Union, with a difficult and responsible task. This event has significantly complicated the situation both in the Member States and in states with which the Union cooperates and is strengthening ties, such as Ukraine or Georgia. The recent ostentatious meeting between the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, and the leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two rebel republics within the territory of Georgia, is a harbinger of the possible behaviour of the Russian Government. Even before Kosovo's declaration of independence, the Kremlin was warning that it would treat its recognition as a precedent that it would subsequently apply with regard to separatist regimes that were loyal to Russia. There is good cause for the Balkans to be regarded as one of the most explosive points on the planet.

The proclamation of independence may therefore cause destabilisation in, say, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from which provinces settled by Serbs may wish to detach themselves. The situation that has come about consequently requires the international community to take some particularly well thought out and responsible decisions, the outcome of which will, however, be freedom and peace.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE).** – (NL) Mr President, last Sunday's proclamation of independence by the Kosovo Parliament was inevitable, and was one of the last stages in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Anyone familiar with the situation in the area knows that after nine years of UN supervision and 20 years of discrimination before that, Kosovo could not just return to being part of Serbia. In this connection, the proclamation of independence is quite a normal process. Besides, it was made calmly, serenely and unemotionally and with full respect for the Ahtisaari plan in the country's parliament. The Prime Minister of Kosovo assured the international community very specifically that it would fully protect and respect minority groups. Incidentally, may I remind my fellow Members that all minority groups in Kosovo actively

support independence? Only the Serbs, with their intransigence and hurt pride, are not on board. In this sense, the speech by the Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs was rather unfortunate.

None of this detracts from the fact that the future of both Serbia and Kosovo does still lie in the European Union, however. I look forward to this with great excitement.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Mr President, the appeals by the Council and the Commission to international law, the principles of the UN and the Helsinki Final Act are truly ironic and provocative. Today, by recognising the independence of Kosovo, the Council and the Commission are infringing them all, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999, according to which Kosovo is part of Serbian territory.

This is a flagrant redrawing of the borders, enforced and masterminded by the United States with the cooperation of the EU itself. Stop this hypocrisy! For two years now you have been debating about how Kosovo will become independent and how the EU will send troops to protect its interests in the region.

We believe that the situation is extremely serious. It will trigger new points of tension and destabilisation for the Balkans in the short term, and throughout the world in the long term, because it will constitute a new precedent. Your imperialist dogma of 'divide and rule' is well known. There are plans to carve up a great number of countries throughout the world so that you can control them.

We believe that the peoples of the Balkans and Kosovan residents of Albanian origin will find themselves facing a new storm resulting from the clashes between the United States, the EU and Russia.

That explains our opposition. We believe that governments ought not to recognise this 'state', which will be a protectorate in the future, and we think that the peoples of the Balkans and Europe should not allow it.

**Georgios Georgiou (IND/DEM).** – (EL) Mr President, whenever the strength of law yields to the law of the strong, the result is suffering.

It is only in Kosovo that we have seen things happening at lightning speed. In 40 years in diplomacy, I have never seen such haste in the process not only of proclaiming independence but also of recognition by certain European states.

What they have recognised is not Kosovo, but a Pandora's Box. I, for one, have never come across a situation so peculiar to itself. Kosovo itself is not *sui generis*, but the establishment of a military base in Kosovo is.

In any case, I believe that we have deviated. In this chamber, in front of MEPs who today represent the democratic governments of Europe, democratic parties and democratic sentiments, I have heard people say: 'You know, we have stepped in to solve the problem where Mr Ahtisaari failed.' What are we? Are we a body of appeal? Is this Parliament a court of appeal?

Instead of worrying about what will happen in Kosovo tomorrow, it would be better, Mr President, for us to think about what will happen when the status of the UN is violated in this insulting, disdainful manner.

**Jana Bobošíková (NI).** – (CS) I am convinced that the question we must ask today is no longer whether to recognise Kosovo or not: the question is how to maintain political stability and security in a region dominated by ethnic hatred and fear and 40% unemployment.

Paradoxically, Kosovo's independence comes at a time when European countries are moving towards political federalisation. The situation in the Balkans, however, clearly demonstrates that EU policy offers no solution that would prevent the division of the state while providing for the peaceful coexistence of all the ethnic and religious entities within it.

In this regard, naming this year the Year of Intercultural Dialogue sounds almost like a mockery.

Ladies and gentlemen, some years ago the United States and the European Union both declared that they would not recognise the independence of Kosovo. Now not only the United States but also many EU countries have done so. It is quite clear, therefore, that the process of redefining national entities exists and will continue to exist, that there is no global solution to it and that it damages or destroys relations with the original country. In such a situation we can have only one goal and that is to prevent bloodshed.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, my thoughts inevitably turn back 17 years, when Slovenia declared its independence; the Minister of Foreign Affairs was Dimitrij Rupel. The majority of major countries in the UN and the EU and the majority of EU Member States refused



to recognise Slovenia at that time. The Foreign Affairs Minister of one large EU Member State said that if Slovenia became independent, other countries would isolate it for 50 years. Today, Slovenia is a recognised, respected, successful country, and a good President of the Council of the European Union. Some of what has been said today in this House should be put into perspective by viewing it in the light of history.

I am glad that Kosovo is now independent as, after decades of oppression, the Kosovars finally have their own free, democratic state, having been oppressed for decades and more recently finding themselves the victim of genocide that was stopped only with international assistance. I call on Serbia to realise that this is also an opportunity for the Serbian people to move forward into their European future – leaving behind the burdens of the past. It must then renounce violence, however! The Serbian Minister for Kosovo cannot then welcome the fact that UN guards on the border with Kosovo are attacked. It is not appropriate then to accuse the democratically elected leaders of Kosovo of high treason instead of commencing neighbourly dialogue with these victims of genocide.

I cannot state this more clearly: it is unacceptable for Bishop Artemije of the Serbian Orthodox Church to call for war. This is not acceptable! This must be very clear – we as the European Union must help Serbia on the way to Europe, but Serbia must also play its part in creating a peaceful, good and neighbourly atmosphere. Three quarters of the Members of this Parliament were and are in favour of Kosovo's sovereignty, so it is not possible to say that the European Union is divided, and I am happy that we are now entering into a good European future for the entire region.

*(Applause)*

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE).** – *(HU)* Mr President, it had become increasingly clear that the declaration of a monitored independence for Kosovo had become inevitable. Our prime task now is to ensure a successful resolution of the situation in Kosovo, to secure stability in the region, to establish an appropriate role for the European Union, to create an EU protectorate, but without it taking on the role of regent.

On the one hand I understand the pain of the Serbs: my country lost 60% of its territory after World War I. Serbia is losing nearly one fifth of its territory, and it is a great tragedy for any nation to lose the cradle of its history, statehood and religion. On the other hand it is a fact that long ago Serbia lost any moral rights it had with regard to Kosovo because the Serbian government failed to provide a proper homeland for the Albanian community living there.

We are sure that Serbia's diplomatic response will not jeopardise the country's integration into the European Union. We must help Serbia to deal with its loss by speeding up convergence with the European Union. It is important to offer gestures, to send positive messages, and so it is vital for the EU to adopt a clear plan of action for lifting the visa requirements for Serbia and the other countries of the western Balkans. Let us speed up Serbia's integration, but without relaxing the requirements in any way.

It is understandable that some EU Member States have reservations. I feel that the concerns of Cyprus and Spain are legitimate, but I am baffled by the apprehensions raised by the Romanian and Slovakian political elites. No-one is threatening these countries' integration. Separation and unilateral declarations of independence must not be a precedent for the EU in future. Implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, on the other hand, which provides a secure regime for minorities, may set a positive precedent for Europe to follow in future with regard to protection of minorities. Thank you for your attention.

**István Szent-Iványi (ALDE).** – *(HU)* Mr President, Commissioner, Foreign Minister, Kosovo's declaration of independence and our recognition of it is not tantamount to choosing the lesser evil; it is the only appropriate step we can take in the present situation.

Negotiations have unfortunately failed to produce results; continuing failure to reach a settlement on Kosovo's status has constantly destabilised the region. There was no other way of resolving the situation than the one that took place last week, definitive settlement of Kosovo's status and acceptance of Kosovo's independence.

We welcome the fact that a large majority in the Kosovo parliament voted in favour of the Ahtisaari Plan. We expect Kosovo to translate the provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan into action, paying particular attention to the provisions concerning protection of minorities. The Ahtisaari Plan represents Europe's boldest regime for protecting minorities, and it may serve as a model and an example of good practice for the whole of the region, so it is very important that we hold Kosovo to account on this matter.

The future for Kosovo and Serbia lies in European integration. This has now become easier for both these countries. They have rid themselves of a grave and crippling problem that until now had consumed all the

creative energy of both countries. Whether they use this opportunity will depend on them. If they do, both Kosovo and Serbia must be given all the support the European Union can provide, especially with regard to prompt lifting of visa requirements and provision of financial support.

It is wonderful that the European Union unanimously approved the mandate of the civilian mission in Kosovo. It is all the more worrying, however, that Member States of the European Union have failed to reach unanimity regarding recognition of Kosovo. If the European Union expects to be taken seriously in the international political arena, failure to reach a consensus on important events taking place in a neighbouring country is something that it cannot allow to happen. It is therefore important for the European Union to speak and act in unison.

To conclude, I wish Kosovo and all its citizens every success and all the best for the future.

**Mario Borghezio (UEN).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, President Pöttering, by saying that the declaration of independence expresses the will of Kosovo's citizens to take control of their own destiny, is making a statement of historical importance.

The independence of Kosovo is a concrete application in Europe of the principle of self-determination for the people sanctioned by the UN Charter. Of course, many of us are very concerned about the creation of the first Islamic state in Europe, welcomed by the entire  *jihadist* media, for example the enthusiastic leader of the Islamic satellite television channel Al-Arabiya, and about the fate of the Serbian Orthodox Christian minority, about whom we are reminded by the wise words from the Vatican.

However – and I particularly stress this – it is still undeniably an important legal and political precedent. There is no point in denying it; it is important for the peoples of Europe, from Corsica to Flanders, Sardinia to the Basque country, Brittany to Occitania, and in our Padania, now regrettably nations without States, who aspire to the dream of self-determination and freedom. Long live the Europe of the people! Long live free Padania!

**Roberto Musacchio (GUE/NGL).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as always when someone acts outside international law, Europe is divided and undone.

Unilateral acts create very serious precedents, and we have now heard what Mr Borghezio had to say. Tension is heightened in an atmosphere that is anything but calm and is full of geopolitical comparisons. Europe is lacking unity, authoritativeness and transparency. We have even read of meetings between the government currently holding the Presidency of Europe and the United States Administration, which has suggested the lines to be taken. It is no accident that this Parliament is politically impotent today, despite the celebrations for the new Treaty. The only way of turning the page is to go back to international law and an independent vision that sees the whole of the Balkans in Europe, recognising the right of the whole area. I hope it is not too late.

**Vladimír Železný (IND/DEM).** – (CS) The European Union's attempt to present Kosovo as a unique case is no more than an embarrassing example of wishful thinking. Not only does Kosovo create a dangerous precedent, it also has an historical precursor. It is a mirror image of the situation in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s and its German minority.

How ironic it is that history repeats itself! The first four EU countries to proclaim in unison that they would recognise the separatist republic were also the four signatories to the Munich Agreement. Back then, 80 years ago, Chamberlain, Daladier, Mussolini and Hitler carved up Czechoslovakia; today it is again Britain, France, Italy and Germany who recognise the carving-up of Serbia. They are tearing from Serbia the historical territory of the Kosovo Field, where in 1389 the Serbian nobility fought an heroic battle to stop the advance of the Ottoman Turks into Europe. That is where Serbian identity was born. Now we, the European Union, are transplanting this historic heart of Serbia elsewhere. Shame on us, Munichites!

**Sylwester Chruszcz (NI).** – (PL) Mr President, in today's debate on the Serbian Province of Kosovo, I would like first of all to protest against the illegal actions of the Albanian authorities, which have been inspired by the United States. In the face of the dismantling of the Serbian State, the reaction of the European Union and certain Member States is outrageous. The European Union is supporting the Albanian separatists and is deciding at the same time to set up a mission in Kosovo that is dubious in the light of international law, and in conflict with the UN position. I am outraged that the EU authorities wish to be a party in this Balkan conflict without having the right or any mandate to do so. By what right is Brussels once again interfering in the affairs of a sovereign state, and violating international arrangements to boot?

What happened on Monday in Brussels reminds me of the Munich Conference in 1938. Here, once again, international society is remaining silent and allowing Berlin and Washington to see their interests put into effect. For the first time since 1945, in breach of international law, borders in Europe are being changed for ethnic reasons. A domino effect and subsequent conflicts linked to actions by Albanian separatists are inevitable. Not much imagination is required to see how independence for this Serbian province could impact on ethnic feuds in other parts of Europe and the world.

**Sorin Frunzăverde (PPE-DE).** – (RO) Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, after 20 years of political and military confrontations, after 20 years of major errors in the Balkans, we ask ourselves whether the Kosovo solution, namely the unilateral declaration of independence of the Kosovo province, is legal and opportune.

The Kosovo solution is neither legal, nor opportune. It is not legal because no international law principle justifies the unilateral declaration of independence of the Kosovo province. Moreover, recently, the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization has found no answer to the question of whether the solution is legal or illegal, leaving a press conference organized at the United Nations headquarters. It is also not opportune because it creates a dangerous precedent. Not for the European Union Member States, not for Slovakia or Romania, countries that have an emancipated and modern legislation regarding minorities, but it creates a dangerous precedent for Abkhazia, for South Ossetia and, especially, for Transnistria, where there are frozen conflicts since the time of the Kosovo conflict. Nevertheless, it equally creates a dangerous precedent for the Balkans – the Republic of Srpska, for instance – for other regions inhabited by minorities in the Balkans. Nevertheless, it also creates a dangerous precedent for the European Union.

It is often said that the Balkans produce more history than they can consume. It seems that, this time, the Balkans have produced more history than the European Union itself can consume. The proof is the fact that we stand here divided from the point of view of recognizing the independence of the Kosovo province.

I can tell you that Romania will not recognize the independence of the Kosovo province and the national action is supported by the Romanian delegation in the European People's Party. We know very well, ladies and gentlemen, we have seen in this room, here, what we should do about Serbia. Its future is, obviously, European. Yet, we do not know what we should do about Kosovo. And I have to confess to you, with all the indulgence you can give me, that the visa system alone, the liberalization of the visa system, will not be enough in order to grow this region of our Europe.

**Kristian Vigenin (PSE).** – (BG) Dear Mr. Chairman, Dear Mr. Rupel, Dear Mr. Rehn, Perhaps now is the time to once more express our regret that no agreement was reached on the status of Kosovo between Serbia and Kosovo but there was no way for the negotiations to continue forever since both sides remained at their mutually exclusive positions.

We could also voice our regret that, today, Serbia and the Serbian people have to foot the bill of Great Serbian nationalism, to which the country is bidding farewell, although with some difficulties. However, we have to be realistic and emphasize that the independence of Kosovo, though not independence in the full sense of the word, is a fact, a real fact that, of course, attributes new quality to the ongoing processes. We have to take into consideration this fact and the disputes whether to recognise it or not do now change its existence.

We cannot but think of the possible consequences that this act will produce on the stability in South-Eastern Europe, hopefully, of a short-term nature only. Still, it is necessary for the European Union to make several important steps: first, to assist the establishment of an adequate administrative and governmental structure in Kosovo, then to speed up the integration of Serbia by rapidly signing a stabilisation and association agreement, and to pay special attention to Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro because there is the risk of missing the forest in South-Eastern Europe for the tree.

**Sarah Ludford (ALDE).** – Mr President, I agree with those who say that there really was no other option but the independence of Kosovo. The EU is taking on its largest civilian mission ever and it will be very important that it is successful. It is quite an extraordinary situation. It is rather difficult to explain to outsiders that, although not all Member States can agree on recognising Kosovo, they all support the EULEX mission. Indeed, a country like Spain is supplying personnel to the mission – this is very EU, very Brussels. But it must succeed.

I agree with Commissioner Rehn that the message to Serbia must be that the time has come to turn the page and, as others have commented, in that context it was somewhat disappointing to listen to Mr Jeremić, the Serbian Foreign Minister, this afternoon. I understand the rawness and the sense of grievance, but things must move on rapidly.

I hope that Prime Minister Thaci will make it absolutely clear to his compatriots that the protection of the Serb minority and other minorities in Kosovo is an absolute priority, because violence will not be tolerated. In that context, I was disappointed that the Serb Foreign Minister did not condemn the violence that has been perpetrated by Serbs in the last few years. He said Serbia did not encourage or instigate it, but he did not actually use the word 'condemn', which was disappointing.

Finally, the important thing, as others have said, is going to be economic development. There is 40% unemployment in Kosovo, and there is massive unemployment in Serbia as well. Let us move on towards rapid integration in the EU, moving via visa liberalisation, which I hope will come very soon.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR BIELAN

*Vice-President*

**Seán Ó Neachtain (UEN).** — (GA) Mr President, I heartily welcome the announcement of Kosovo's independence last Sunday.

Nine years have passed since the terrible bombing of Kosovo on the orders of Milošević's regime. The people of Kosovo have a right to independence and in a way the events of the last nine years have contributed to the advent of this independence. It is extremely important that the civil and political rights of the Serbian minority still residing in Kosovo are fully respected.

The European Union will have to support the Government of Kosovo in order to promote the economy of the country, because the rate of unemployment in Kosovo is at 40% and that must be rectified.

I hope this is a new beginning for Kosovo and that the European Union will be happy to support the rebuilding of this new state in the years to come. I also hope that it will become an example of the wishes of the European Union that people and communities can live in harmony.

**Georgios Papastamkos (PPE-DE).** — (EL) Mr President, the EU does not build states; it incorporates them. The diverging European views on the problem of Kosovo constitute an admission of the CFSP's failure. The EU has sacrificed its internal consultation to the political strength of its Member States.

Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates as a precondition that the Union shall act in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders.

Since the EU is a union of law, as Mr Salafranca has said, what is the basis of European legal liability? Specifically, on what legal basis have certain Member States pressed for recognition on the basis of international law?

Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999 does not provide sufficient justification or legitimacy for this. The point of the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council on the *sui generis* nature of the Kosovo situation is that the case in question has no precedent. **I hope that it does not constitute a precedent.** It is unique; there is a special reference to adherence to the fundamental principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, which, as is explicitly stated, are not in doubt.

Finally, I should like to remind you that these principles constitute the hard core of international law on vested interests.

**Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE).** — (ES) Mr President, the debate is already at an advanced stage; I do not think that I can contribute a great deal to it, not even in terms of passion, but I do think we have to focus on the importance of international law and international commitments.

On 16 December 1991, EU Ministers adopted guidelines on the recognition of new States in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union and affirmed respect for the inviolability of all borders and that borders could be changed only by peaceful means and by common agreement.

Secondly, the resolution under which there is currently a European presence in Kosovo – UN Security Council Resolution 1244 – specifically lays down that the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region must be respected.

A breach of international law, of the commitments of the European countries and of the UN resolutions has been committed. The consequences will be costly for all of us.

**Bogusław Rogalski (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, recognition of Kosovo's independence is equivalent to opening Pandora's box in Europe. This is a dangerous precedent, in breach of international law – especially of UN resolutions – which has stated unambiguously that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia.

Today, with international approval, steps are being taken to dismantle one of Europe's states. I am saying this as an MEP from a state that has already experienced such dismantling in its history. There can be no consent to this. This is a dangerous precedent, since Kosovo's footsteps have been followed by South Ossetia and Abkhazia, among others, who have already announced a desire to break away and a desire to declare independence. What shall we say about Cyprus, which is striving for unity at all costs? With such an example, and by setting this example for the Cypriots, we are putting them in an unclear and ambiguous situation in which they will be unable to fight for the unity of their island.

Above all, ladies and gentlemen, recognition of Kosovan independence is a gift for the progressive Islamisation of Europe, and I do not think that any of us meant that to happen.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE-DE).** – (ES) Mr President, I regret Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. It is not good news for Europe. It is the last link in a chain of failures: a failure to coexist, which resulted in the crisis in 1999, a failure by the parties and the international community itself to reach an agreed solution and a failure by the Security Council.

There is a fear that the entity that some hastened to recognise is another failure. It should provide a framework for democratic, secure coexistence, in which citizens prosper and the rights of minorities are respected; it should also avoid being a problem for the stability of the region. Ladies and gentlemen, the European Union has also failed, as it has not found a solution in its neighbourhood that is in line with international law.

Europe should mean union, not separation; agreement, not multilateralism; de jure, not de facto; integration, not ethnic division. As Europeans we have a significant responsibility in this area: we were in the majority in the Contact Group, the UN Special Envoy and his team were Europeans, and it was the European Council which, in December, hastily decided to send a mission to Kosovo without legal basis.

I would like to point out that paragraph 15 of Parliament's Resolution in March said the following: 'Considers that the adoption of a new UN Security Council resolution is also crucial for the future engagement of the EU in Kosovo, and that no enhanced EU involvement should be envisaged in the absence of such a resolution.'

The circumstances in the case of Kosovo are exceptional. However, there are irresponsible people who want to change the borders of European countries and are using it as a precedent. This is why the inviolability of the borders of EU Member States needs to be reiterated.

**Richard Howitt (PSE).** – Mr President, I am persuaded that the fact Kosovo was already a UN protectorate, that the solution is supported by the UN Secretary-General, and that negotiations had failed, all mean that Kosovo is a unique case in our world. I refute those who argue that this is an illegal act. Paragraph 11a of UN Resolution 1244 makes clear that this is 'pending a final settlement'. Paragraph 7 specifically authorises security by 'relevant international organisations ... with all necessary means'.

I accept that this is a test of credibility for the European Union, that any failure to respect the Serb population's rights in the new Kosovo would be a victory for ethnic cleansing in reverse, and that we should emphasise that Serbia, as well as Kosovo, will be equal partners as future members of our European Union.

But let not the ghost of Slobodan Milošević stalk this decision or this Chamber. The entrenchment of peace, the precursor of reconciliation, the platform for a whole region – as the fall of the Berlin Wall was for Eastern Europe, so let independence for Kosovo be for former Yugoslavia.

**Alojz Peterle (PPE-DE).** – (SL) After the changes that have taken place, our task is not to explain history or to spread alarm by talking about the domino effect, but to support the development which will ultimately stabilise the region and bring it closer to European standards and a European perspective.

It is an important fact in this extremely complicated story that the European Union has taken on a big responsibility. It was united in its decision on the EULEX mission to help in the building-up of institutions and in political and economic development. The European Commission has also set out measures to support the development of the wider region. All this is aimed at defusing this dangerous situation that offers no prospects, and removing the unusual paradox that part of Europe, surrounded by the Member States, is a protectorate of the United Nations.

It is not only my wish, but also the wish of others, that the reconciliation, peace and cooperation which now characterise the European Union may become a key principle or a foundation for coexistence within Kosovo, as well as in the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo.

In these demanding days for both Serbia and Kosovo, and in the spirit of what I said earlier, I would like to welcome the words and actions of all those who have expressed their commitment to peace, moderation, openness and the future.

**Maria Eleni Koppa (PSE).** – (EL) Mr President, we are faced with a state of affairs that may have far-reaching consequences, not only for the Balkan region but also internationally. The claim that it is a *sui generis* case does not indemnify us.

The circumvention of international law and its rules is highly dangerous. For the first time, borders have been changed with neither the agreement of the parties involved, nor the approval of the Security Council.

Once again, Europe has appeared divided on such a vital issue and has repeated the mistakes of the past. The extent to which the 2 000-strong force can guarantee safety and stability in the region is also in doubt.

The declaration of Kosovo's independence is now a fact. We support a peaceful, multi-ethnic Kosovo integrated in the bosom of the EU. The solution to the crisis can only be to secure the path to rapid unification of the Western Balkans with the EU.

The immediate signing of the Stability and Growth Pact is necessary, especially for Serbia, as the only way of providing real support for its democratic forces. Finally, the way the situation is handled will be a crucial test for European foreign policy.

**Charles Tannock (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I fail to see the rush to resolve the Kosovo issue, circumventing the UN and ignoring current international law. I believe that Kosovo's new nationhood will be difficult, with no obvious exit strategy for the EU, whose presence will be long term, given a hostile Serbia next door and the prevalence of organised crime. Independent Kosovo's acceptance by Russia and China, who are on the UN Security Council, is very unlikely in the foreseeable future.

We have now managed successfully to injure a Serbia trying to forget Milošević and build a democratic future. Its loss may fan nationalist sentiments and drive Serbia towards Russia, which, in turn, may apply the precedence of the Kosovo situation in frozen conflicts ranging from Transnistria to Abkhazia. Russia will, interestingly, now claim the moral high ground in international law – perhaps for the first time in recent history.

I have considerable sympathy with Cyprus, which has refused to join the majority of EU Member States in recognising Kosovo. Already, Mr Talat, the leader of the so-called 'breakaway republic of Northern Cyprus' claims Kosovo as a precedent for his territory. As an aside to Mr Howitt – UN talks also failed over the unification of Cyprus, so that issue is not unique to this case.

Not surprisingly, Spain is concerned about the Basque Country and Catalonia, and Slovakia about its Hungarian minority. Curiously, although the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has welcomed an independent Kosovo as a potential new member, Azerbaijan, although in the OIC, is wary over Nagorno-Karabakh claiming independence and refuses to recognise Kosovo.

Therefore, whatever the EU and the US are saying about this issue being *sui generis*, clearly not all the countries of the world agree.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I would like to make two points. Firstly, the most important thing is that the independence of Kosovo was proclaimed after supervision of the situation there by the international community for a number of years, and the international community, after long deliberations, could not find a better solution to the problem than the independence of Kosovo.

Therefore, following Russian attempts to relate the situation of Kosovo to some other regions of Europe, like Transnistria, South Ossetia or Abkhazia, it is not difficult to make this counter-argument dangerous or not suitable for Moscow itself.

Would Russia agree to withdraw from those territories and leave control of the 'frozen conflicts' areas of Europe to the international community? If so, then we, the EU, would get a real chance to reach a long-awaited solution, and we should be interested in this.

Secondly, it is well known that some countries try to warm their hands above the embers of each fireplace of international instability. This time, Russia, pretending to defend the interests of Serbia, decided to play its own geopolitical game, pretending that, without its assent, no problem in the world would be solved. This position is not new or unexpected.

But Russia is not the most important player this time, as it does not have real power to angle events in a way which would not be acceptable for the West. For instance, in the future, Kosovo's attempts to join the United Nations might not be easy, but Russia cannot achieve any significant isolation of the state on the international stage because, when Kosovo is recognised by a majority of EU Member States, the United States and some other countries, the isolation will become meaningless.

I salute the independence of Kosovo and wish the Kosovar people the best of luck in building their state.

**Ioan Mîrcea Paşcu (PSE).** – Mr President, the difference between the external actions of the EU and other international actors is respect for international legality and UN decisions. I am afraid that, by encouraging and recognising the independence of Kosovo outside the current body of international legality and the UN, that defining characteristic of EU external actions becomes questionable, if not even untenable. I only hope that we will not live to regret the decision we have taken with respect to Kosovo.

**Árpád Duka-Zólyomi (PPE-DE).** – (SK) Kosovo has declared independence. This is no surprise; it was to be expected. The international community must take note of it. If this region is supposed to be peaceful and stable then the EU Member States must act as one and give their full support to this country's development, in accordance with Mr Martti Ahtisaari's plan.

Those Member States and politicians, from Slovakia too, who spread unsubstantiated rumours that this act will be a dangerous precedent for other countries are mistaken. Kosovo is a unique case. We should look back at the root of those bloody events nine years ago when Serbian military forces committed genocide against the Albanians. It is quite understandable that members of the Albanian community do not want to live within the Republic of Serbia. Making them to do so by force would result in a war.

The EU has a very important role to play in creating a society in which all citizens are equal and where minority communities have extensive rights to maintain and develop their identity, as well as a right to run their own public administration: this means extensive autonomy for the Serbian community.

**Elmar Brok (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to make three comments. Firstly, the fact that we are in this situation shows that we as the European Union were once again not in a position to hold our own between the two poles of Russia and the United States.

My second point is this: we must now do everything we can to establish minority and cultural rights in Kosovo. The Kosovar Government would therefore be well advised to do a great deal in far-reaching, practical ways. I would like to thank you, President-in-Office of the Council, for making an important contribution through EULEX.

Thirdly, for historical and cultural reasons, I have a lot of sympathy for the sentiments in Serbia right now and I believe that, for this reason, we need to be patient as we allow Serbia to find its way to the European Union, and that we must support that process. We must also make it clear, however, that violence will not be tolerated. We should continue to pay our funds – EUR 187 million in 2007 – but on condition that things proceed peacefully, in order to pave the way for a stable region.

**Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, the Serbia of Milošević – and even after him – followed the advice of its big brother, losing every time rather than taking a realistic stance and trying to find ways towards more amicable divorces, with the prospect of meeting again in Europe. Maybe it will happen now.

One special remark to those worried about one-sided interpretations of international law, the integrity of states or the sovereignty of territories and peoples: we should understand and take into account the fact that a state which seeks to exterminate or expel all citizens belonging to a different ethnic population is killing not only them but, first of all, its own claim to sovereignty – sovereignty over mass graves. Integrity of cemeteries is not a case to accept. And no parallels with the Basque country, Quebec or Abkhazia should be accepted. Neither Madrid nor Ottawa nor Tbilisi is going to bomb and kill those people.

Russia is different. Russia has also been denied by its own actions of repeated genocide and has no more right to sovereignty over survivors in Chechnya but merely the medieval law of the fist.

**Adrian Severin (PSE).** – Mr President, some claim that we should leave aside the issue of recognition of the state, when speaking about Kosovo, and instead deal with recognition of the reality.

The reality is that, after its statement of self-determination, Kosovo is neither independent nor able, for long, to be an independent, sustainable state. It was a protectorate and it will remain a protectorate. The reality is that the European Union is divided between the so-called realists and the so-called legalists. The reality is that, by calling Kosovo a *sui generis* case, we are admitting that international law is either insufficient or inadequate and we are therefore finding a solution outside the law. This would lead us to replace the power of right with the power of might. I think this is neither the goal nor the basic value of this Union.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE).** – (PT) Following Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, the worst thing that could happen now would be for the political impasse to place us in the unwelcome situation of looking on as tensions mount. We must therefore establish the lowest common denominator in defining our future decisions and actions; from that point of view, what the President-in-Office of the Council said left me not exactly satisfied, but hopeful. We must remind Kosovo that the path it now takes will inevitably influence its future relations with the European Union and that, therefore, we are willing to help them and we have an obligation – in our own interest, too – to hold out not one hand but both hands to Serbia and to say that we retain the firm conviction that Serbia's future is in Europe.

Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet empire, let us not provoke what the communists of those days did not manage to do: to put Serbia in the exclusive sphere of Moscow. We must not make that mistake.

**Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL).** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, the time has come at last: yes, those who want the independence of Texas to be recognised by the United States, those who want to see the west of Romania separated from it as a purely Hungarian territory, those who want an independent Scotland, Catalonia, Basque Country, and all the other states that will no doubt come into existence in Latin America and Africa.

It is said that Kosovo does not set a precedent. That is a mistake: it is a territory that has been ethnically cleansed of eight nationalities with the help and acquiescence of the occupational forces, a territory that is riddled with drugs, human trafficking, 50% unemployment and constant pressure on the remaining Serbs. Now it is declaring independence of a second Albanian state and that sets a bad example. It will now continue to haunt all of you who have literally massacred international law here. Shame on you: this is a second Munich and no true democrat should ever support it.

**Dimitrij Rupel, President-in-Office of the Council.** – First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Parliament and the Members who supported the Council's position. I accept that there are different opinions; that is normal for parliaments. However, it seems to me that the European Union has been given support at today's session.

I would like to answer some questions. The first question is on the system we are envisaging for command, that is to say for future responsibilities, and here I am thinking, of course, of institutions in Kosovo. The European Union has obviously sent a special representative to Kosovo. In its declaration of independence, the Kosovo Parliament agreed, from the outset, to the provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan. The provision of the entire plan will be built into the Kosovo constitution and into its legislation.

Accordingly, the task of the European Union's special envoy will be to monitor the local authorities and to safeguard the obligations which the new status demands. After the International Civilian Office has been established, the European Union's Special Representative will become the High Representative for civilian affairs for the international community. He will also give political guidance to EULEX.

I would like to add that the European Union has done much in recent days, primarily to calm the situation and secure adequate support for Kosovo. In addition to the mission about which the Council made a decision a few days ago, I would like to mention yesterday's visit to Priština by the Secretary-General and the High Representative, Javier Solana.

I would like to quote just one sentence from his address. Mr Solana said:

'I would like to transmit that the sentiment, the joy, that you spread so respectfully on the streets over the last days now has to be converted into positive and constructive energy in order to move society forward.'

'I would like to transmit that the sentiment, the joy, that you spread so respectfully on the streets over the last days now has to be converted into positive and constructive energy in order to move society forward.'



That means, I think, that all of us also wish our friends in Kosovo to be prepared to convert the energy they have displayed in the last few days into rational action that will secure a respectable European future not only for Kosovo, but also of course for Serbia.

I think much has been said in the speeches and Members' contributions today about Serbia deserving to continue on its path towards integration with the European Union, and as I was listening to the speeches by various representatives of this Parliament, I could not help envisaging that in the future Serbian will be spoken here too. And, I hope, Albanian as well. I trust we will hear the languages of countries which so badly wish to become members of this Parliament and the European Union.

However, in view of the remarks we heard from some of our Spanish friends, I would not say that harmonisation of the text of the decisions was not difficult for the General Affairs and External Relations Council, but in the end, we managed to agree with our Spanish and Cypriot colleagues on a text which reflects unanimity, joint decision-making and collective thinking.

Finally, I would like to say, Mr President, that naturally I have to agree with the speech by my colleague from Slovenia, Mr Kacin, when he spoke of the need for Serbs in Kosovo to accept Kosovo as their homeland too and take part in its government. Of course, Kosovo is their country too and every delay by Kosovan Serbs in cooperating in the government of Kosovo may be detrimental.

May I say that these debates have given me encouragement and I would like to thank you, Mr President, and the ladies and gentlemen of the European Parliament for all these constructive comments.

**Olli Rehn**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I want to thank the House for a most responsible debate. It was widely recognised today that the European Union has indeed left no stone unturned in seeking a negotiated solution, but this has unfortunately been in vain. Consequently, we are now bound to steer the process to its conclusion.

Many of you also underlined the importance of not isolating Serbia, and especially of reaching out to the younger generation in Serbia. I fully agree, and am happy to inform you that we already have a visa facilitation agreement in force with the countries of the Western Balkans, including Serbia. This means easier procedures when applying for visas, and exemptions for certain groups like students and business people. I am also happy to inform you that we have already started a special dialogue on visa-free travel, which is very important for ordinary Serbian citizens and other peoples of the region.

We did this with Serbia in January, and my colleague Commission Vice-President Frattini is in fact in Skopje today, and in Podgorica tomorrow, to launch dialogues with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and with Montenegro.

But in order for that to succeed we need determination and unity throughout the institutions, including the Council, in terms of ministers of the interior who have strong powers in this area. I count on your support in this regard, so that we can make real progress, united on this matter.

*(FR)* As far as European unity is concerned, the fact that the EU has been able to maintain its unity on such a tricky and controversial subject is truly of major significance. I would even say that the common foreign policy has responsibly passed one of its most serious tests since its creation. I would like to congratulate the Slovenian Presidency on this outcome, which reflects your profound commitment to the future of the Western Balkans in Europe.

I also note, with much satisfaction, the desire of the future French Presidency to support fully the European perspective of the Western Balkans. Therefore 2008 will be a particularly important year in the journey of the Western Balkans towards Europe.

**President**. – The debate is closed.

#### **Written statements (Rule 142)**

**Kinga Gál (PPE-DE)**, *in writing*. – *(HU)* In central, eastern and south-eastern Europe those of us who were born in this less fortunate region of Europe have learned from experience that spoken words and paper promises have little credence. The important thing is how these are complied with in reality. In Kosovo the Ahtisaari Plan has succeeded in becoming an idea that can be realised beyond the promises, bringing calm to the region.

Some say it cannot set a precedent; but why not, one may ask, if it creates a functioning regime for protecting minorities? If it is adhered to in reality, then it should indeed serve as a precedent. Those of us who grew up as part of a minority and were not masters of our own destiny can only welcome any innovation that promises a long-term solution for ethnic communities that live side by side. If the Ahtisaari Plan is adhered to and implemented, the story of Kosovo that is now beginning may be just such a long-term solution.

We are concerned for the minorities living in other areas of Serbia who are anxiously following these events. Will there be a solution that provides reassurance for these minorities, or for ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina?

I ask the Council and the Commission to ensure that the general unrest does not lead to irreversible actions, to resettlement measures in Vojvodina. Let us not allow ethnic tensions to be vented on the minorities still living there. The events currently taking place must not be allowed to result in more instances of people being deprived of their rights, but in a strengthening of rights. Let us ensure that good precedents are finally set in the Balkans, giving the ethnic communities living there hope and prospects for the future at last.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT)** The unilateral declaration of independence of the Serbian province of Kosovo is not inevitable.

It is certainly an extremely serious development and a dangerous precedent in international law, with unforeseeable consequences for the stability of borders, in particular on the continent of Europe.

It is certainly a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act.

It is certainly an illegal decision in the light of the most basic principles of international law.

It is certainly the artificial creation of a *pseudo-State* under *supervised sovereignty* – and whatever that might be it will certainly have less sovereignty – or, rather, of a protectorate created and imposed by aggression and military occupation, by the USA, NATO and the EU.

It is certainly an attempt to perpetuate by means of a *fait accompli* policy, the political, economic and military domination of that most important region of Europe by the USA and the EU's major powers.

That illegality must not be recognised, either formally or in practice, in particular through sending and taking part in the 'EU mission to Kosovo'. That EU mission does not actually have any UN mandate. It is an EU mission which, in addition to being illegal in itself, is making an agreement with an illegal entity, therefore rendering it doubly illegal.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FI)** Mr President, Finnish Councillor of State Harri Holkeri, who was acting as a negotiator in the Kosovo crisis a while ago, thought that the Albanians' quest for independence could not be ignored forever, as that would be a return not to a zero score but a lot less.

As many Members have said, Kosovo's independence was an inevitability. It has likewise been pointed out that Kosovo is a *sui generis* case, and so independence poses no threat to the international principles of law for resolving conflict. Europe therefore got a new country based on sustainable criteria.

Of course it is regrettable that no reconciliation, not even any minimal level of tolerance, has been achieved between the parties. The international community can hardly be accused of not trying, as negotiations were headed by the distinguished peacemaker Martti Ahtisaari. Now we need to remain adamant that Ahtisaari's plan continues to be the guiding star whilst the new country is being built. Its requirements offer a chance for the Western model of rule of law and internal and external stability in the region.

The security of Kosovo and the west Balkans is above all a European issue. Whilst, therefore, it is once again evident that the UN Security Council is incapable of taking responsibility for the situation, the EU has to prepare to make an effort. The integration of the west Balkans with the general European framework of stability is probably our greatest challenge since the Union began. Regional tensions are now threatening to increase, the nation is frustrated by unemployment, and corruption and crime have taken hold.

The declaration of independence in Kosovo was eagerly awaited, and it led to real joy among the populace, which, as a European, I can easily relate to. Now that exhilaration should be tapped to build what is the hardest thing: lasting peace and stability. It succeeded 50 years ago elsewhere in Europe – why not in the Balkans at long last?

**Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL)** My group and the national delegation of my party in the European Parliament have decided recently to reject the present path towards Kosovo's independence. I can understand

this, as the EU is currently behaving like a superpower, unilaterally imposing its will on Serbia, which has already been humiliated many times, and treating Kosovo as its protectorate.

This does not mean that I take back what I have said on the subject in past years. Under the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, which gave Kosovo almost as much autonomy as the six federal republics of the time, it might have remained possible for Serbs and Albanians to coexist peacefully within a single federal state. The unilateral abolition of that autonomy in the 1980s made the Serbian State a pointless and even harmful entity in the eyes of most inhabitants of Kosovo. Kosovo has been behaving like an independent state since as long ago as September 1991, with its own president, parliament and educational system.

If, back then, the outside world had acted in a timely fashion and recognised that state, along with the other successor states of Yugoslavia, no violent UÇK would have arisen, the inhabitants of Kosovo would not have been condemned to resort to crime as a source of income, and there would have been no cause for the war of 1999.

**Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) Eight years after NATO's war in Yugoslavia, the Kosovo problem not only remains unsolved, but also has become more intractable. The 'standards before status' criterion (i.e. democracy, return of refugees, conditions of multicultural coexistence, etc., before the final regime is decided upon) established by UN Resolution 1244 has not been fulfilled in basic terms. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration pushed the leadership of the Albanian Kosovars towards a unilateral declaration of independence, with all that this entails for peace and stability in the Balkans, as well as for other international issues. By approving a new mission in the region, the EU is supporting this policy and is contributing to the violation of UN Resolution 1244 of 1999. The unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence will cause a chain reaction of destabilisation in the Western Balkans and a negative precedent for many international issues. We must base a solution on international law, in a way favouring neither the politics of divide and rule, nor local nationalist and expansionist ideas, nor changes to borders. We believe that it is still possible to find a mutually acceptable solution within the framework of the UN, based on international law. We are therefore in favour of continued negotiations.

**Toomas Savi (ALDE), in writing.** – It is unfortunate that the European Union stands divided on the issue of Kosovo. The European Union has taken a longstanding commitment to secure stability in the Western Balkans and, as the most influential supranational organisation of the continent, we need to convey a clear message and speak with one voice.

Peace and security in Kosovo ought to be a priority for the Union, since it neighbours the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a candidate country to the EU, and we should play a leading role as a mediator between Serbia and Kosovo. It will not be an easy task, when there is no agreement in the Union, whether to recognise the independence of Kosovo *in corpore* or not.

Current indecisive behaviour of the Union creates only more confusion in Kosovo. The Member States need to find a way through their differences in order to start carrying out our commitment to the region.

**Csaba Sógor (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (HU) I was in Priština myself on Sunday. It is a rare thing for us to be present when a country declares its independence. I intended my presence to be a message: even if this decision is painful for many, it was announced in circumstances where we were not afraid.

Independence was announced in the hotel where, years ago, guests were welcomed by the following sign above the door: 'Entry prohibited to dogs and Albanians'.

The process leading up to Kosovo's independence was not instigated by the EU. Serbia started it by not guaranteeing fundamental human rights, individual and community rights to its citizens living in that territory.

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) takes the view that Romania should recognise Kosovo's independence as soon as possible. Those who are reluctant to acknowledge the situation perhaps have unfinished business with the minorities in their own country.

Since its inception, the DAHR has wanted and still wants to fight for the rights of Transylvanian Hungarians using only political and parliamentary means, and rejecting violent means.

It may now become clear to everyone that the question of the individual and collective rights of traditional national minorities cannot merely be an internal issue for a country. It is time to draw up a standardised agreement in the European Union (EU) that applies compulsorily to everyone and reassures minorities.

The main duty of the European Union is to offer help to stabilise the region in the areas of economy and social development, not only to Kosovo and Serbia but to the whole western Balkan region.

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bid Kosovo a heartfelt welcome as one of the countries of Europe. The declaration of independence was a brave act on Kosovo's part. Now the country and its people need to show the same courage and self-assurance as they start to build their own multicultural society.

It has been obvious for a long time now that the struggle for Kosovo's independence was a one-way street. It was only a question of time. The deadline for independence would have been Serbia's accession to the European Union. Fortunately, they did not need to wait that long. Kosovo has been under UN administration now for 10 years. The situation is completely different from what it has been in other separatist regions.

The years to come will require far-sightedness and wisdom on the part of Kosovo's leaders. I believe they will show those qualities. War, ethnic hatred and an administration run by the international community are experiences from which lessons have to be learnt. The most important thing now is to focus on building a stable civil society. Independence also removes the uncertainty which has kept both domestic and foreign investments away.

Mr Ahtisaari's plan provides an excellent framework for the initial stages in the country's independence. Success will only be possible if the leaders and the people perceive the building of their country as their very own project, and not as a set of rules and regulations dictated to them from abroad. The international community also needs to be able to keep a distance and let the country's Kosovan and Serb populations build their own model of coexistence. There are almost as many examples of multicultural countries as there are European states. Kosovo is no exception where this is concerned.

Once again I offer my congratulations to the Kosovans and welcome them as a newly independent country.

**László Tórkés (NI), in writing.** – (HU) Kosovo's declaration of independence is making big waves in our region. The Romanian parties that are currently preparing for elections are using the occasion to create anti-Hungarian hysteria. They are all lining up against Hungarians in Transylvania, which is similar in size to Kosovo and has a similar population to the Albanian province.

The 'deep concern' of the Romanian parliament is completely unfounded and unjustified. Romania must not be afraid of the Hungarians. Our national community in Transylvania does respect the Romanian constitution and territorial integrity.

At the same time, however, we have reason to expect that, based on the principle of 'territorial rights', Romania will deal with the situation of our national community in a European way, and ensure the personal autonomy of Hungarians (1) and the regional autonomy of Transylvania and other regions (2) on the basis of the principle of self-governance that applies in the European Union.

In line with Council of Europe Recommendation 1609/2003, based on the Gross report, we admit that autonomous regions largely promote conflict resolution and reinforce the stability of Europe.

At the same time, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that Romania itself may also benefit from the new situation since the autonomy model of the Kosovan Serbs may also provide a solution for the Romanian communities living across the border in Serbia and Ukraine.

Taking all this into account, it would be advisable for Romania not to subordinate its amicable settlement to ethno-political prejudice, but to recognise the independent Kosovo as soon as possible, like most other Member States of the Union.

**Iuliu Winkler (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (HU) I welcome the European Union's active participation and assumption of responsibility in looking for a solution for Kosovo. I acknowledge my satisfaction that the Kosovan parliament has assumed the responsibility for Kosovo to respect the principles of democracy, equality of citizens and protection of minorities. I hope that solidarity will develop among the Member States of the Union, in the interests of assuming an effective role in Kosovo. Solidarity among the Member States of the EU in connection with Kosovo must manifest itself in the Member States recognising the independence of Kosovo as soon as possible.

The European Union must support Kosovo in its endeavours to become a European democratic state. I welcome the fact that the Union will continue to guarantee its emphatic presence, since in this way the Union can contribute directly to stability in the Western Balkan region.

I am sure that the Serbian minority in Kosovo will fully guarantee the individual and collective rights necessary for them to stay in the land of their birth.

The European Union's assumption of responsibility in Kosovo is exemplary. We know that the situation of every European minority is unique, so there are no general solutions, but the Union must play a part in ensuring the individual and collective rights of minority communities, using its influence to reinforce the effectiveness of democratic dialogue and political agreement between the majority and the minority.

It is crucial for the minority communities living in the Member States that legal regulation of the protection of minorities in the Union be established.

## 10. Seventh Human Rights Council of the United Nations (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the Seventh Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – I am pleased to have been given an opportunity to talk to you about the Human Rights Council.

By placing this item on the agenda for the plenary, the European Parliament has confirmed the importance that Europe as a whole gives to the Human Rights Council. It is a central, global body for the protection of human rights. The European Union is a firm advocate of an effective Human Rights Council. We have worked very hard to ensure that, in its final form, it offers a firm basis for a fast and efficient response to the most serious human rights violations.

As we know, in December last year the final institutional package for the Human Rights Council was adopted and now is the time for the Council to be fully operational. The sixth session of the Council which took place in September and December last year produced many important results, which I am not going to list here. It is our ambition to continue this work at the seventh and eighth working sessions.

The seventh session will take place next month and it will be very busy. Together with the eighth session, to take place in the first two weeks of June, it is to debate the extension of 25 special rapporteurs' mandates, regular reports by special rapporteurs and several disturbing human rights situations in some countries with regard to certain topics.

From the point of view of the European Union, the extension of mandates for the special rapporteurs for Burma/Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, and Somalia is of crucial importance for the seventh session of the Human Rights Council.

In addition, the European Union will use every opportunity offered by the Council to draw attention to the worrying state of human rights in other places around the world. To that effect it will get involved in interactive dialogues with individual special rapporteurs and with the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Interactive dialogues are a significant new instrument of the Council, and the European Union will continue striving to consolidate it as one of the key means offered by regular Council sessions to address individual issues.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, for the period of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Slovenia has listed intercultural dialogue as one of its priorities. Therefore, we are pleased that this issue will also be given due attention at the seventh session of the Human Rights Council.

The invitation sent to the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilisations, Mr Sampaio, to attend the session indicates an enhanced awareness that the activities of the Alliance of Civilisations help to strengthen religious tolerance, which is also one of the European Union's priorities in the human rights area.

Allow me to present another very important development within the framework of the Human Rights Council, namely the introduction of a universal periodic review, to which the European Union attaches great importance. This instrument should offer a means of reviewing the human rights situation in all the Member States under the same conditions. Members of the European Union which will already be subject to this

mechanism by the spring (April and May) are currently making thorough preparations for this review. We will strive for maximum transparency and efficiency in that process. The method by which this periodic review is going to be conducted will have a significant effect on the credibility of the Human Rights Council as a whole.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I welcome this opportunity to address Parliament on the subject of the Seventh Session of the Human Rights Council. Let me start by putting the Human Rights Council in what I believe to be the appropriate context.

I have said this before, but it is important to keep it in mind: the Council is a work in progress. This becomes clear when one looks at the past year and a half of its activities. Despite a rocky start, with deep divisions over the Lebanon crisis and a negotiating environment which continues to be difficult for the European Union, important results have been achieved. I am thinking here, particularly, of the innovation of human rights pledges submitted by candidates for election; the ability to hold special sessions on urgent human rights situations, a far cry from the annual ritual of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights; the development of ‘interactive dialogues’ with UN special procedures, a very public means of focusing attention on human rights violations; and, finally, the adoption of the all-important institution-building package by consensus.

The President of the Council, Ambassador Costea, was in Brussels last week to brief the Council and Parliament on preparations for the Seventh Session. He described the Council as being ‘better than expected and worse than hoped for’. This may sound cynical, perhaps reflecting the reality of day-to-day UN work, but I think it also sets the tone accurately. There is both good and bad in the Council, but it is making progress and is, therefore, on the right path.

Priorities for the Seventh Session fall between addressing urgent human rights situations effectively – increasingly, the standard by which the Council should be judged – and continuing to implement the institution-building reforms. On the human rights situation, effective follow-up to the special session on Burma/Myanmar is paramount. Amongst other priorities, the human rights violations in Sri Lanka and Kenya should also be addressed in this session. Implementing the institutional reforms is, arguably, just as important, given their impact on the future success of the Council. Here, agreeing criteria for the election of members of the Advisory Committee and the transparent appointment of suitably qualified candidates for the special procedure mandates to be renewed are key concerns of the Seventh Session.

Finally, let me make a couple of comments on the universal periodic review, or the UPR, as it is known. The President reported this week that the states under review in the April and May sessions are taking their responsibilities seriously. I hope so. The early sessions of the UPR are likely to set the tone for the remainder. It is, therefore, vital that the EU Member States being reviewed lead the way with frank critiques of their human rights records. This should be no beauty pageant.

Furthermore, I see an important role for the European Union in the ‘outcome sessions’ of the UPR. The UPR is, more than anything else, about the international community cooperating with states under review to achieve concrete human rights improvements after a genuine self-analysis of failings and needs. The European Commission and the Member States should not be slow in offering technical assistance where it is merited in these outcome sessions. To do so would show our genuine commitment to the promotion of human rights in an important public setting.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – Mr President, Parliament is sending a delegation to the Seventh Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The delegation will be mandated to voice Parliament’s concerns on the HRC’s work and will report to the Subcommittee on Human Rights during its visit.

We see the Seventh Session of the HRC as a crucial one, because it will be the first to examine a large range of substantial issues under the new working methods stemming from the institution-building reforms package adopted in 2006 and 2007.

The credibility of the HRC rests on the implementation of these reforms and mechanisms, and our goal is to strengthen the Council’s ability to address human rights violations around the world, especially the most urgent ones.

We pay tribute to the positive results of the HRC, in particular the developments in the implementation of the universal periodic review, and the review of special procedures, as well as to the positive achievements of the Human Rights Council Presidency.

We welcome the participation of civil society and human rights defenders, as well as the special procedures, which are at the core of the UN human rights machinery, and play a critical role, especially in the Human Rights Council.

At the same time, we condemn certain decisions of the Human Rights Council, such as that not to renew the mandates of the special rapporteurs on Belarus and Cuba.

Taking into account the lessons of the past, we stress the importance of competitive elections being held in all regions, in order to provide real choice among UN members. The reason is that, to our regret, some countries with problematic human rights records have so far been elected.

Once again, I call on the Council, Commission and Member States to continue to press for the establishment of membership criteria for election to the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the issuing of permanent invitations for special procedures.

Speaking about EU involvement, we recognise the active role of the EU and its Member States in the first year of work of the HRC. It is very important for the EU to speak with one voice when addressing human rights issues, and we call on the Commission and Council to adopt a common position so as to ensure EU Member States automatically sign and ratify all international human rights instruments.

Last but not least, the EU should make more effective use of aid and political support to the countries in question so as to give them incentives to cooperate with the Human Rights Council.

**Józef Pinior**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Mr President, the United Nations Human Rights Council is one of the most interesting areas in the field of human rights for the European Parliament. We closely monitor the activities of that Council, and the European Parliament sends its missions to Geneva twice a year.

I would like to make three remarks. First, I would like to pay tribute to the positive achievements of the Council Presidency and, at the same time, I would like to stress the importance of support from the European Union and, equally, of candidates with high standards of integrity for the elections of the new President of the Council, to be held on 23 June 2008.

Second, I would like to stress that special procedures are at the core of the United Nations human rights machinery, playing a critical role, especially in the Human Rights Council, civil society and democratic states. In particular, the EU States need to monitor and pressure Council members to fulfil their responsibilities to promote human rights.

The European Parliament has to condemn the Council decisions not to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteurs on Belarus and Cuba. We should welcome the renewal of the country mandates of the Special Rapporteur on Sudan and of the independent experts on Liberia, Haiti and Burundi.

Third, much legitimate criticism of the Council centres on its disappointing treatment of specific country situations. Particularly one-sided international sympathy for the Palestinian cause and the agonised efforts of Islamic states led the Council to address the Middle East conflict, but there was repeated criticism of only one state – Israel – ignoring violations by Hezbollah and some Palestinian factions. The challenge is to build the political will for the Council members to effectively address such a situation in a just manner.

**Hélène Flautre**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, on the eve of the Seventh Human Rights Council, Parliament wishes to send a message of support, vigilance and mobilisation.

The Council is the only international body that actually fights human rights violations, and particularly that responds to emergencies, to human rights crises, but also that works long term with the special rapporteurs and in an interactive dialogue with NGOs. The Council is unique and is at a difficult turning point in its history. One year will not be enough to establish its effectiveness. On the other hand, it may be enough to discredit it, and there have been many attempts to weaken and divert it, as we know.

I would first like to mention the situation of Mrs Sigma Huda, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons. She is in prison in deplorable conditions in Bangladesh. Next, concerning these same special rapporteurs, the Advisory Committee's proposals will finally be decided by the President as a last resort. That gives you

an idea of just how important his role is, and I would like to salute the excellence of the work done by President Costea, and at the same time draw your attention to the fact that he will be replaced in June.

That is why the EU has to remain attentive and proactive. Its action is decisive. We saw it in Gaza. The EU's abstention waters down the message considerably, and weakens the Council itself.

However, when the EU takes the initiative of a special session and throws its whole weight behind it, the Council grows and achieves results. To do this, our Member States need to strengthen their transregional alliances to convince others and prevent any block reaction that would send the Council back into the throes of political contingencies.

We therefore call upon our governments to step up their efforts and set an example. Set an example by appointing an independent expert when they participate in the assessment of another government as part of the UPR and by themselves being open to criticism and self-criticism, and set an example for the election of new members. A standing invitation to the special procedures should be a criterion of prime importance for EU Member States.

**Richard Howitt (PSE).** – Mr President, I commend this resolution to you. Indeed, I commend the work of the Parliament's delegation to Geneva where, as well as holding our own EU representatives to account, we work with them to engage in dialogue with countries in other regions of the world, demonstrating Europe's strength and solidarity in upholding human rights and international humanitarian law.

I am grateful for the inclusion of my amendments in the text supporting the call for a special session on violence against women and for the signature and ratification by all our countries of all international human rights instruments. I call for Europe's support, in particular, for the renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative on Business and Human Rights. But having just returned from Gaza, I would like to commend to you paragraph 34 in particular. This is a state of siege, with mediaeval conditions being imposed on the people of Gaza. Today we will identify it as a clear breach of human rights. If even Tony Blair cannot get Israel to allow the import of equipment to stop 40 000 litres of untreated human waste poisoning the water supply, it is time for Europe to act. European troops under a new mandate could help supervise the reopening of the borders and, as I now ask for your support, European countries can achieve agreement on all sides in the UN Human Rights Council to seek enforcement of international humanitarian law. We, as Europe, can take the initiative, as was suggested by the Slovenian Presidency at our Human Rights Subcommittee in Brussels only last week. We can propose a balanced text that recognises that both terrorist rocket attacks as well as the collective punishment of the blockade both break the fourth Geneva Convention. In doing so, we can achieve a consensus in Geneva which can make a real difference to the humanitarian crisis suffered by the people of Gaza.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, a critical examination of the old mechanisms and ways of working and the establishment of new practices have inspired much hope in the ability of the Human Rights Council to act as an effective body which focuses on how human rights violations are dealt with and allows political situations to fall clearly within the competence of the UN bodies.

The credibility of the Human Rights Council also depends on the new special procedure mandate holders who are to be appointed in March. It is hugely important that expertise, impartiality, independence and objectivity are the crucial factors.

Like many others here, in the current situation I too would like the decision of the Human Rights Council not to extend the mandates of the special rapporteurs on Belarus and Cuba to be reconsidered. The EU Member States should also try to guarantee that the mandate of the independent expert on the Democratic Republic of Congo is extended.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I would like to thank the Members who took part in this debate and offered their opinions, which will undoubtedly help the Presidency of the Council in its preparations for the seventh session of the Human Rights Council.

I would like to stress in particular that I strongly agree with the statement by Mrs Andrikienė regarding the need for the European Union to appear unified, speaking with one voice, at the Human Rights Council.

I would also like to draw attention to the fact that the Presidency is also hoping for good cooperation with the European Parliament delegation. The importance of the European Union's role in the promotion and protection of human rights is indisputable, which is why we would like to have the best possible cooperation of this revered assembly.



I would like to end by saying that the seventh session of the Human Rights Council will start with the meeting of ministers, which will be addressed, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, by the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Minister Dimitrij Rupel. A number of other high representatives, perhaps even the Secretary-General of the United Nations, will be taking part.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, the European Union is a very important body that has to go in the right direction and lead the Human Rights Council in that direction.

The Council has yet to prove itself as an effective human rights organ within the United Nations; that much is clear. However, as I said before, it is too early to pass a final judgment. Indeed, to do that at this stage might even hinder its future progress. That is why it is important that the human rights community continues to support the Human Rights Council, albeit with a critical eye. In that vein, I am pleased that a delegation of the European Parliament will be attending part of the Seventh Session to assess its work at first hand.

Like Ms Andrikienė, I think that the European Union will have to strive to speak with one voice on this issue. Voting patterns of EU members on the Council are very harmonised, and the more harmonised they are, the more important our voice will be.

Concerning the criteria for membership, so far it has proved impossible to draw up such criteria. However, the pledges on human rights commitments will be important steps towards more responsibility for the candidate countries and, as I have said before, this is an important step.

Concerning the special procedures, the EU is fighting actively to extend existing mandates and establish the new ones we deem necessary.

Finally, let me say a word on Belarus and Cuba. The Council can be criticised for not continuing the mandates for those countries, but this was a compromise made necessary to save many of the other country and thematic mandates that are currently being reviewed. Similarly, for instance on Sudan. It is regrettable to lose the mandate of the Expert Group on Darfur, but this was unfortunately unavoidable in order to save that of the Special Representative on Sudan.

Therefore, in order to achieve consensus, the European Union sometimes has to be prepared to make difficult compromises. But, again, on the whole, we are a very strong motor and body in this area, and we have to go on working to ensure that the Human Rights Council really works and goes in the right direction. The European Parliament is a very, very strong tool to help us on that path.

**President**. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday 21 February 2008.

**IN THE CHAIR: Diana WALLIS**

*Vice-President*

## 11. Question Time (Council)

**President**. – The next item is Question Time (B6-0010/2008).

The following questions are addressed to the Council.

Question No 1 by **Manuel Medina Ortega** (H-1042/07)

Subject: Immigration in the wake of the EU-Africa summit

Can the Council provide information on the measures proposed for adoption in order to implement the agreements reached at the recent summit held in Lisbon between the EU and the countries of Africa on the subject of immigration?

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – It was agreed at the EU-Africa summit held on 9 December last year in Lisbon to establish a strategic partnership which would encompass all areas and issues of mutual interest.

I would especially like to draw your attention to three important documents which were adopted at that summit: the Lisbon Declaration, the EU-Africa Joint Strategy and its First Action Plan. This First Action Plan

of the Joint Strategy establishes a partnership between Africa and the European Union in the supplementary fields of migration, mobility and employment.

The partnership between Africa and the European Union in the areas of migration, mobility and employment should ensure comprehensive responses to these issues with the specific aim of creating more and better jobs for Africans and better control of migration.

At the moment, the competent bodies of the Council are studying further measures that will need to be undertaken on the basis of the decisions of the Lisbon summit and on the basis of the EU-Africa Joint Strategy and its First Action Plan, including the partnership in the area of migration.

**Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE).** – (ES) Madam President, the question is: what type of measures can be taken effectively, because the migratory pressure on Europe is still very high, as a result of the distressing social and economic situation in many African countries.

The specific question that I wanted to ask was whether, in fact, the Council currently has any concrete plan, because time is marching on, the situation in Africa is not improving and, in particular, many European countries are complaining of uncontrolled immigration and of the inability of the European institutions to control it.

What are we actually doing at the moment? What can we expect in the short term?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr Medina Ortega, the problems you were mentioning will not be resolved in a short period of time. The situation in Africa in the fields of economic development, security and peoples' welfare are of such dimensions that the time span for their resolution can only be long-term.

A long-term easing of migratory pressures can only be achieved with improved living conditions on the African continent. The summit could not offer answers to all the issues; in particular, it could not offer quick solutions. As I have mentioned, the summit took place in December and debates on the measures to be adopted for implementation of the agreements reached at the summit are only just starting now.

I can say that the EU-Africa summit established a framework for all the talks on migration management which have been conducted at several conferences between Africa and the European Union. The EU-Africa summit now integrates the Tripoli process, the Rabat process and all the other processes. This is the first achievement, the consolidation of our efforts.

I would like to mention the essential feature of the European Union's policy on migration in relation to Africa. We are primarily striving for a global approach. This is an approach which includes the fight against illegal migration, efforts to improve the management of legal migration, prevention of human trafficking, better border controls and, above all, development of the countries from which such migration originates. Only this development will provide a long-term solution to the migratory pressures facing the European Union. The other measures I have already listed are at best short-term solutions that will not eradicate the essential problem which you yourself mentioned, the problem of the conditions prevailing in the countries of origin. That is the essential driving force behind migration.

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – (DE) I salute the way you are looking at the big picture here and distinguishing between medium- and long-term strategies. You referred to a summit coming up soon. Are you, as President-in-Office of the Council, prepared to call for an agreement by the relevant states in Africa on the readmission of illegal immigrants as a condition for positive cooperation, for more economic assistance and more assistance of other types?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – The Council's policy on the return of illegal immigrants is well-known. It is one of the constituent parts of the European Union's migration policy that is being implemented with our African partners.

Development aid is also an aspect of migration policy, that is to say it must be taken into account, and immigration policy should be viewed from that perspective too because it addresses the long-term problem of creating better conditions in the countries from which the migration originates.

Frankly, I do not wish to speak about the direct application of conditions on development aid in relation to these aspects. It is a fact, however, that they are elements of the whole migration policy, which are still to be linked together and strengthened in the future.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE).** – (DE) President-in-Office, if there is one area in which people in Europe want the European Union to shoulder responsibility, it is the area of illegal immigration and immigration policy as a whole. Although, in my opinion, Parliament and the Commission are very active in this area, I am not so sure about the Council. You said that everyone knows what the Council is doing on this matter. I know what it is doing – and that is to do all it can to prevent the creation of vitally important European competences. That is what it has been doing for years. I would be interested to know what makes you so optimistic that anything will change and what concrete measures you are putting in place to bring about change.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Thank you for your question. I cannot agree that the Council is passive when it comes to migration. On the contrary, recently, especially last year, the Council paid a lot of attention to migration. I should also mention that the European Council plans to debate the issue of migration at its December session this year. That means it will be discussed at the highest political level.

The problem of migration is a real problem for the European Union. I have already mentioned the solutions and indicated the direction in which we should be looking to find them. More precisely, I could mention the further strengthening of FRONTEX. That is also one of the areas in which the Council is engaged.

It is important to address demand for migration. We must manage migration flows better and reduce the brain drain from Africa because it perpetuates bad conditions in large parts of the continent.

The Council is involved in developing concepts of mobile partnership and circular migration and, for this purpose, is continuing its missions to African countries. I should mention that during our Presidency there will be a mission to Nigeria and to the Republic of South Africa. The Council is pro-active and wishes to contribute.

It is a fact, however, that this is an area that falls into the third pillar – an area of justice and home affairs – where frequently there have been long procedures in search of a consensus. If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified and implemented, this will be an area where future decision-making will be easier and faster.

**President.** – Question No 2 by **Claude Moraes (H-1046/07)**

Subject: Regional funding after enlargement

What solution has the Council found for the issue of redistribution of regional funding made necessary by EU enlargement?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I should say in response to Mr Moraes' question that the inter-institutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management has defined the financial framework for the European Union and the 27 Member States for the period between 2007 and 2013. This interinstitutional agreement was adopted in May. In July 2007 the legislative package on cohesion policy was adopted on the basis of that agreement. In short, after the enlargement in January 2007, there was no need for a reallocation of resources.

**Claude Moraes (PSE).** – You spoke about the wider analysis of structural funding, but you may be aware that, last week, Eurostat published figures which showed which were the richest areas in the European Union and the richest cities. These included my own constituency of London, yet I live in a part of London which ranks among some of the poorest areas in Western Europe in terms of child poverty and so on.

Really, my question to you was: will you continue to take into account the fact that even in the richest areas, like London and Frankfurt, there are still pockets of poverty, which have been left behind, and should not be left behind just because we are quite rightly helping the poorest parts of Europe?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Thank you for this additional question. I think I now have a better understanding of the original question about the effect of enlargement on regional financing, to which my answer was that there was no effect because the resources had been appropriately allocated before enlargement.

However, the supplementary question is also a reasonable one. The question is whether such phenomena should be handled within the framework of regional policies. Affluent regions should perhaps be allowed or obliged to do more to eliminate pockets of poverty. This is probably done more easily by affluent regions than by those less well-off.

In short, we must take into consideration the concept of regional politics and regional resources within the framework of the European Union. This does not alter the reality of the problem you have pointed out.

**Danutė Budreikaitė (ALDE).** – (LT) Mr President, Minister, I would like to ask if you have any information, any figures, to show how the growth of GDP has been influenced by structural funding given to new accession countries and maybe even older Member States. Research carried out in my country, Lithuania, has shown that it was not structural aid, but development of the single market and the internal market that had a major impact on economic growth. Are you able to supply such figures? Thank you.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – No, honourable Member, I have not got those figures with me. However, I can say two things.

Firstly, the common market benefits all the Member States, both old and new, and everyone else associated with this common market. There is no doubt about that and it can be seen in the 2006 European Commission report entitled 'Enlargement, two years after', which mentions and evaluates the beneficial effects of the enlarged common market and other aspects.

As regards the Structural Funds, the situation is as follows: What is important is not only the level of resources for a particular purpose within the Structural Funds, but also the quality of application of those resources. That is how I can maintain that, when applied well, these resources contribute to a higher *per capita* income in the country in question.

**Jim Higgins (PPE-DE).** – The Minister has had a very long day, so I am just going to suggest that, from the point of view of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, he look at the example of Ireland, where the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund played a major part in transforming a third world economy into what is the Celtic Tiger. It shows what can be done. Three out of the four legs under the Celtic Tiger were provided as a result of the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and other funding from the European Union.

We wish the new Member States well, and we wish you well in your presidency.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I would only like to comment. The example of Ireland was given. Mr Higgins, you are probably quite right. Ireland is a model example of how good and effective application of Cohesion and Structural Funds contributes to more rapid development.

When I say that Ireland is a model example, I am quite serious. In other words, many countries, particularly those which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, are doing their utmost to adopt Irish experiences and 'know-how' when using these funds, in order to emulate Ireland's success.

**President.** – Question No 3 by **Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (H-1048/07)**

Subject: 'Flexicurity' at work

What measures does the Council intend to take in the near future to settle outstanding labour relations issues and support the ideas of 'flexicurity' at work?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – In December 2007, on the basis of comprehensive studies carried out by European institutions as well as social partners, the Committee adopted decisions on eight common principles relating to 'flexicurity'. Those principles were also confirmed by the European Council.

The Council noted in these decisions that the common principles should contribute to the implementation of the new cycle of the Lisbon Strategy. Recently, the Commission presented a proposal on integrated guidelines for 2008-2010. We can expect the Council to devote particular attention to flexicurity in the debates on this proposal, which have already started.

Responsibility for implementing the integrated guidelines will rest with the Member States. It is expected that, when reporting to the Council and the Commission on the implementation of those guidelines, they will refer to their regulations on flexicurity.

The Council is of the opinion that it is necessary to raise citizens' awareness of flexicurity policies and of the importance of those policies for reforming European economic and social models. Therefore, in its decision, the Council called on the Commission to instigate a public initiative to enable the relevant interest groups in the labour market to adopt the common principles more easily. The Council also asked the Commission to keep it regularly informed about the measures in question.

As regards the two important legislative proposals in the field of working conditions – I am talking about the Working Time Directive and the Temporary Employment Directive – the Slovenian Presidency is prepared to continue working on this matter. In view of the difficulties in reaching unanimity among the Member States, we are still assessing further possible procedures relating to that legislation. It should be mentioned in this respect that Europe has many and varied traditions in the regulation of working conditions. The Member States nevertheless managed to agree relatively quickly on the common principles of flexicurity, although they warned that these principles would have to be adapted to the specific conditions in each Member State.

All this indicates that the agreement will be more difficult to reach when looking for a solution in the form of binding legislation applicable to all the labour markets in the Union.

**Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (PPE-DE).** – (EL) Madam President, the citizens of every Member State – employers and employees – are subject to pressure with regard to working relations. In many cases this is certainly due to globalisation, but it is also caused by the open method of coordination that the European Union has been implementing for years.

Thus we are raising objections to the proposals for the reform of insurance systems and to other measures based on this open method of coordination.

Does the Council intend to propose structural measures to improve working relations at European level in order to remove the strong opposition and protests that we see on television in all the Member States?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Of course the Council intends to continue and develop its efforts to improve conditions in the labour market. It is often said that improved flexibility in the labour market means reduced social security, but this is not so. The essence of the concept of flexicurity or secure flexibility is precisely that. The Council is convinced that this is the only correct course in the context of globalisation, which includes many issues.

What matters is not merely increased flexibility in the labour market, which should never be to the detriment of social security; there are a whole number of other measures such as life-long learning, better development of human resources, and other aspects of flexicurity.

In short, the Council intends to continue its activities in this field, and that will be one of the important issues to be debated at the March session of the European Council as part of the impetus for the new phase of the Lisbon Strategy.

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – (DE) As the word flexicurity suggests, the ideal is a combination of flexibility and security. This morning there was a debate about this and a suggestion came from Parliament that a minimum wage should be introduced in Member States according to their minimum standards. What will the Presidency do to guarantee that the minimum wage will in fact be realised in individual Member States within the foreseeable future?

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE).** – Could I ask you to comment a little more on the point you made when you said that you would want to raise awareness and have a public initiative on this whole flexicurity issue. My feeling is that workers probably know the ‘flexi’ part very well, but are less clear on that of security in this new world of work.

And, on the issue of the minimum wage: coming from a country which has a minimum wage, I believe the issue is to make sure everyone is getting a minimum wage.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Firstly, my response to Mr Pirker. At the moment there is no consensus in the Council, that is to say the Council does not have a common position regarding the minimum wage, so in this phase the Presidency is not planning any specific initiatives in that regard.

Secondly, my response to Mrs McGuinness. I have mentioned Council’s proposal, that is to say an appeal to the Commission to instigate a public initiative to explain the eight common principles to all interested groups in the labour market and making it easier for them to accept those principles, which were adopted in December last year.

At the same time, the Council called on the Commission to keep it informed of the relevant measures. The Council asked the Commission to act in a particular way, and we are now waiting for some feedback from the Commission.

**President.** – Question No 4 by **Gay Mitchell** (H-1050/07)

Subject: EU mission to Chad

Will the Council make a statement on the EU's mission to Chad, and in particular on the present security situation on the ground? Will the Council give assurances that all necessary equipment for this difficult mission is available? How is the Council coordinating with the UN over the long-term situation in the region?

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – The process of shaping the forces for the European mission to Chad, which did not go so smoothly, was completed by 11 January this year to the extent that the commander was able to recommend commencement of the operation. On 28 January the Council confirmed the operation plan, the so-called 'o-plan', and adopted a decision on its commencement.

As we know, the Irish General Patrick Nash is commanding the operation. The force consists of 3 700 soldiers from 14 Member States. These forces are composed, equipped and trained to fulfil their mission satisfactorily in a difficult environment. Their rules on the use of force are strict and in line with the mandate laid down in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

As we know, that mandate was given in Resolution 1778 of the United Nations Security Council. The European Union's operation, known as the EUFOR Chad-Central African Republic operation, will be conducted for one year from the date of declaration of the initial operational capability and will be neutral and impartial.

Planning was executed from the outset in close cooperation with the United Nations. To ensure transparency, efficiency and the possibility of modifying the measures, appropriate coordination mechanisms have been established at all levels, in New York and Brussels, at operation headquarters in Paris and on the ground.

After recent clashes between government forces and Chadian rebel groups, the security situation in Chad is now more stable. The deployment of the EU mission is continuing and we expect EUFOR to reach its initial operational capability by mid-March.

Let me mention some decisions adopted by the Council at the last session on Monday, the day before yesterday. The Council expressed its deep concern regarding the regional ramifications of the conflict in Darfur and attempts of overthrowing the Chadian government. It backed the African Union and the United Nations' call for the respect of the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Chad.

The Council stated that recent events underscored the need for the deployment of the mission to Eastern Chad, where their task should be to increase security. The Council has also stressed that, in the observance of its mandate, the mission will be impartial, neutral and independent.

I will finish by adding that the Council will closely follow the security situation in Chad and Western Darfur at all levels and also assess the consequences of this situation for the EUFOR mission.

**Gay Mitchell (PPE-DE).** – President-in-Office, you did not answer my question, which was, specifically, if you could give an assurance that the necessary equipment for this difficult mission is available. Would you please answer that question and give an assurance?

As you said, it is under the command of an Irish Army officer, Lieutenant General Nash, and this evening 50 members of the elite Irish Army Rangers will be leaving Dublin, and will be followed by many more Irish troops in the near future.

Will there be sufficient logistical back-up? Do they have the medical services they need, and will you give an assurance, as I asked in my question, that all the necessary equipment for this difficult mission is available?

I wish God's speed and protection for the Irish Rangers and all the soldiers who are there, in their difficult task.

**Janez Lenarčič**, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – I should emphasise that in principle the equipping of units is the responsibility of each individual Member State that is sending units to a mission.

Honourable Member, you are asking about assurances that the Council cannot give, because they are the responsibilities of each individual Member State. I can only repeat what I said in the introduction, namely that the process of forming of the forces was completed successfully. It was difficult, but in the end it was successful to the extent that the mission commander recommended that the mission could commence.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE).** – (DE) I believe that this mission is a good idea in principle – as long as it is carried out professionally – because it achieves precisely what was addressed in the migration debate we heard earlier, namely creating security where immigrants come from. Therefore, I simply cannot understand that some hypocritical Austrian right-wing populists are against this mission. However, what I am concerned about already is that it is a constant topic of discussion whether, in particular, the French army will conduct itself in this mission with neutrality towards the parties in dispute. I would be interested to know what information you have about this and how you will ensure that the mission remains neutral overall towards all disputing parties. I would also like to take the opportunity to wish the soldiers there all the best.

**Colm Burke (PPE-DE).** – I have a question in relation to contact with groups which are opposed to the government. I am not talking about rebel groups, but other groups which are opposed to the government. Has any effort been made to bring them on board, so that we have a more unified approach to the UN mission that is going into Chad, or the European Union mission that is going into Chad?

All contact so far seems to be with the government itself. I wonder if the way forward might not be to get people on board who may be opposed to the government, but who are not involved in rebel groups.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – In answer to the question on neutrality, I can only say that the Council decided again on Monday, the day before yesterday, that the EU units in Chad will be impartial, neutral and independent. In my opinion this contains the answer to the question on the neutrality of the individual units involved in this operation. The whole operation is neutral, impartial and independent.

This also holds part of the answer to the supplementary question that followed. This is not an operation to recruit supporters. It is an operation which should, in an impartial and neutral way, guarantee security in the region to which it will be sent. It should not be looking to find some kind of ally. I repeat, it is a neutral and impartial operation whose task is to guarantee security in the region under its mandate.

**President.** – Question No 5 by **Colm Burke** (H-1052/07)

Subject: Burma

Regarding the appointment of Mr Piero Fassino as EU Special Envoy for Burma to support the UN's good offices mission, and considering the important role of ASEAN, India and China in relation to Burma, how productive were Mr Fassino's recent meetings with China and other Asian nations?

In line with the GAERC conclusions of 15 October, the Council reaffirmed on 14 December that the EU stands ready to review, amend or further reinforce restrictive measures against the Government of Burma in the light of developments on the ground. What further restrictive measures would the Council consider (seeing as those presently in place are having somewhat of a minimal impact) and can the Council set a deadline for their implementation?

According to a recent fact-finding visit by the NGO CSW to the Thai-Burmese border, the number of people killed by the Burma Army in the crackdown on peaceful protests in September was far higher than official figures. Monks and civilians who had fled Burma since September gave CSW first-hand accounts of the regime's brutality against the pro-democracy movement. CSW has found that hundreds may have been killed during the Burma protests, and forced labour and rape continue in ethnic areas. How does the Council respond to this report? According to the Council, the EU is determined to assist the people of Burma/Myanmar further on their path to democracy, security and prosperity. How does the Council propose to do so more specifically?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I should mention from the outset that on 6 November last year, the European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, appointed a Special Envoy for Burma/Myanmar to highlight the importance which the European Union attaches to democratic change, reconciliation, improvement of human rights and development of the country.

Under this mandate, the Special Envoy, Mr Fassino, has asked for a meeting with the United Nations Special Adviser, Mr Gambari, and has also consulted the key partners of the European Union.

In November last year, in the margins of the EU-ASEAN Summit in Singapore, the Special Envoy met the representative of the ASEAN countries. In December he also went on his first mission to China. He met the representatives of Burma and its neighbours in Rome and during visits to the United Nations in Geneva and New York, and he will also be meeting their representatives in Brussels.

These consultations and political and diplomatic contacts made by our Special Representative will continue in the coming months. Particular attention will be paid to mediation by the United Nations and the United Nations 'Group of Friends'.

At the session on Monday, the General Affairs and External Relations Council welcomed the work of the Special Envoy, Mr Fassino, in coordinating the diplomatic efforts of the European Union and its Asian partners and reaffirmed his role in supporting and promoting the United Nations mission.

I should point out that, some time ago, the European Union adopted an overall common position which includes an arms embargo on Burma and travel restrictions and the freezing of assets for a large number of Burmese citizens connected with the military and the government.

In November 2007 the Council adopted stricter sanctions to reinforce the existing measures and to set up new ones, especially measures aimed at extractive activities. As anticipated, the Council will study the effect, efficiency, political suitability and practical feasibility of possible further restrictions.

The Council receives and studies information from its partners and many representatives in governmental organisations about their experience with the stricter sanctions.

The Council has noted that some Member States of the European Union and the Commission have recently increased aid to Burma and Burmese refugees in neighbouring countries. The European Union would be prepared to guarantee additional aid to Burma/Myanmar. For that reason it is calling for the Burmese authorities to adopt further measures to democratise the country and reach national reconciliation.

The official announcement of a referendum on the constitution, which should take place in May of this year, and in particular of multi-party elections in 2010, is, in the opinion of the Council, a step in the right direction.

**Colm Burke (PPE-DE).** – This is just a follow-up to your response to this very complicated matter, which I much appreciate.

I would just like to raise two related issues. Firstly, the General-Secretary of the KNU was assassinated in his home in Thailand on 14 February. I understand that Christian Solidarity Worldwide had visited him two days earlier. What pressure have we placed on Thailand to investigate that murder? I understand that the assassination was ordered by the regime in Burma.

Secondly, my understanding is that refugees coming into Malaysia have been quite badly treated. In fact, some refugees gave birth while in custody or in prison. What pressure we have put on both Thailand and Malaysia in relation to dealing with these issues?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – The Council did not discuss this issue in connection with either Thailand or Malaysia. I will forward your question to the Council.

**President.** – Question No 6 by **Jim Higgins (H-1056/07)**

Subject: Democracy movement in Burma

In the wake of the recent brutal suppression of the peaceful street protest in Burma, could the Council say what action it is taking to ensure that the democracy activists are protected and that the military junta works towards a peaceful and quick transition to an open democracy, and if has made representations for the return of the disappeared in Burma, including monks whose whereabouts are unknown since the latest protests?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – As I mentioned in the previous answer, the Council is following the situation in Burma/Myanmar closely and is receiving reports from various sources.

The EU, together with other countries, responded to the demonstrations of last August and September and to the violent suppression of those peaceful demonstrations, with the clear aim of displaying its solidarity with the Burmese population. Also, it adopted stronger restrictive measures targeting those responsible for violence and the general political deadlock and conditions in the country. As mentioned before, because of the difficult living conditions of the population and because of the numbers of refugees, some Member States and the Commission have increased aid to Burma as well as to Burmese refugees in neighbouring countries.

In addition, the European Union was among the instigators of the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva in October 2007, which authorised the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human



Rights, Sérgio Pinheiro, to visit Burma/Myanmar and investigate the violent suppression of the September demonstrations and the alleged killings and disappearances following the events.

The European Union fully supports Professor Pinheiro's recommendations in his December report and regularly calls on the authorities in Burma to implement them. The EU has approached the Burmese authorities on many occasions. It is also attempting to utilise meetings with Burma/Myanmar at multilateral forums to call on the authorities to begin an inclusive and overall process of reconciliation and political reforms, to eliminate the limitations imposed on Aung San Suu Kyi, to release political prisoners and to improve access for international organisations, especially the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The EU has presented these opinions to Burma's neighbours and stressed the urgent need to improve the situation in that country. As I have mentioned, the announcement of a referendum on the constitution and multi-party elections in 2010 has given some hope.

**Jim Higgins (PPE-DE).** — (GA) Mr President, I welcome the response of the President-in-Office of the Council. He said in answer to my colleague, Colm de Búrca's question that he wanted Burma to be more democratic.

As regards that, I would like to ask a question about the new Constitution: is it not true that this document was drafted without the involvement of the leader of the main democratic opposition party, Aung San Suu Kyi? That is in no way satisfactory.

And is it not evident, that the army and the armed forces will keep a tight hold on or control power?

Another important question: Will there be any independent monitoring on the part of the EU or the United Nations as regards the referendum and the Constitution?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – I am yet to receive an answer to the question as to whether independent monitoring of the referendum planned for May is guaranteed. For the time being we only have an announcement that the referendum will take place. As I have already said, the Council is of the opinion that this is a step in the right direction. Your question is, of course, pertinent and will be forwarded to the Council.

To answer the first part of your question, the European Union is insisting that the democratisation processes in that country must include the cooperation of the opposition and ethnic groups, because only in that way can we hope for national reconciliation and a long-term stability of that country.

**President.** – Question No 7 by **Mairead McGuinness (H-1054/07)**

Subject: Audiovisual Media Services Directive

Does the Council believe that the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 97/36/EC<sup>(1)</sup> will be able to keep pace with developments in audiovisual technology and advertising?

Is the Council satisfied that requesting media service providers to develop codes of conduct towards children is a sufficiently robust measure to protect children's particular interests - for instance, to prevent advertising of so-called 'junk food' aimed at children?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mrs McGuinness probably already knows that on 11 December last year the Council and the European Parliament adopted a directive to amend the Television without Frontiers Directive and rename it the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

The first recital of the new, amended directive explains that it is necessary to amend the directive because of the development of new technologies and their impact on business models, especially the financing of commercial broadcasting. The aim of the new directive is to find answers to these technological changes by introducing some new, technically neutral, terminology-based definitions that will enable them to be used not only for the current services, but also for those forms of service yet to be developed, such as audiovisual media services and services on demand. To satisfy this future capability, we think that the directive regulating the audiovisual sector should be valid for a few years to come.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 202, 30.7.1997, p. 60.

Pursuant to this directive, and not later than 19 December 2011 and every three years thereafter, the Commission must prepare a report of the application of the directive and, if necessary, make further proposals for its adaptation, especially in respect of new technological developments.

As regards junk food advertising for children, the European Parliament and the Council agree that this issue could be dealt with most effectively if the providers of audiovisual media services were to develop codes of conduct. For this purpose, the second paragraph of Article 3(e) of the amended directive includes a requirement that all Member States and the Commission encourage media service providers to develop such codes.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE).** – You have answered the first part of my question very fulsomely, and I thank you for that.

On the second part, perhaps what we need is a code of conduct that is effective, because we have many codes of conduct on paper, and they are not effective. I would ask perhaps that you make a statement in relation to when we review codes of conduct and see that they are not having an effect, will we take tougher action? I think we may need to.

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – The essence of a code of conduct is precisely that it is developed by the providers themselves. However, it is clear that if the codes are inadequate and do not meet the needs, neither the Council nor the Commission will be satisfied. That is why my answer to your question is basically that the Council and the Commission must persist at least until the providers have developed effective codes of conduct.

**Jim Allister (NI).** – President-in-Office, could I direct you to another matter in terms of the protection of children in the context of media, in particular against the background of rising and alarming suicide rates in Europe, not least in my own constituency? This is, what can the Council do in respect of the gross misuse, in particular via internet services, of readily available advice on how to commit suicide? I today downloaded information from one such site, which gave multiple advice on how to commit suicide.

It is quite appalling. Even if one goes onto Wikipedia one can find information on how to commit suicide. Will the Council address that in the context of child protection, in particular in the context of media?

**Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE).** – (DE) My question relates to the telecommunications package presented by the Commission, where new opportunities for television arise as a result of the digital dividends, i.e. through the use of the digital spectrum of frequency allocation. Do you see a need to modify the Television Directive based on the new technical regulations?

**Janez Lenarčič, President-in-Office of the Council.** – In view of the problem pointed out by Mr Allister and the cases which should be condemned and require action, I should mention that, even prior to being amended, the directive contained a ban on advertising anything harmful to health. It also banned communications that may cause physical or moral detriment to minors. I think those definitions also cover the cases mentioned. I should also say that the amendment to the directive was published last December and the Member States have two years to incorporate it into their internal law.

As regards the 'telecom' package, I find it difficult to answer the question, which requires a more detailed analysis of the need for changes. However, this question has been discussed. The legislative package relating to telecommunications is being debated at the moment. Your question will be forwarded to the Council. I am in no doubt that if a change has to be introduced, it will be.

**President.** – Questions which have not been answered for lack of time will be answered in writing (see Annex).

That concludes Question Time.

**Sajjad Karim (PPE-DE).** – Madam President, I would just like to thank the services for very promptly acting upon the information that I sent them to accurately record my actual voting intention. That has now been done, so I would like, through you, to forward my thanks to them for acting as efficiently as they have done. The public record now shows my actual voting intention. I am obliged to you.

(The sitting was suspended at 19.05 and resumed at 21.00)

**IN THE CHAIR: MR SIWIEC***Vice-President***12. The demographic future of Europe (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the report (2007/2156(INI)) by Mrs Castex, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, on the demographic future of Europe.

**Françoise Castex, rapporteur.** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the debate we are continuing this evening began within these walls several years ago. It will not end with the adoption of this report, which still leaves some questions unanswered, and which we will undoubtedly have to come back to in the near future. In any case, I would like to thank the Commission for the quality of its communication, which has enriched the debate, and we have benefited from it in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

In my report, I develop the consequences of demographic change, i.e. the shrinking of the active population, the growing number of elderly people, and the demographic imbalances between different regions of Europe. Is this to say it is impossible to act on the causes? I would first like to remind you that the 20th century saw two vast changes.

Firstly, women gained access to education and training on the same footing as men. Secondly, women gained control over their reproductive lives through contraception. These are two factors of women's emancipation. They mark great, and I hope irreversible, progress for humanity.

However, to have all the information for analysis at hand, two other things need to be added as well. All the studies show that European citizens would like more children than they actually have, and secondly, in Member States where the employment rate among women is high, the birth rate is also high. An active working life therefore does not prevent people from having children, provided that there is reconciliation of work life and family life for everyone, men and women alike. There is still a lot of progress to be made in this area, in all Member States.

Another point arose during our discussions, one that nobody essentially disputes. Economic insecurity and fear of the future are important factors behind the drop in the birth rate. When it is difficult to plan for the future, people hesitate to have children. This is a key point, and I think that the drop in birth rate recorded in the European Union is a serious warning from this point of view. To regain confidence in the future, our citizens need their job security and dignified living conditions restored. Enough of the causes, what about the consequences?

The main consequence is a reduction in the active population, falling from 331 million in 2010 to around 268 million by 2050. How can we maintain Europe's growth and competitiveness with a tiny active population? This is where the title of the communication takes on real meaning, Commissioner, and real force: turning a challenge into an opportunity. Europe still has some very high unemployment rates today, and the margin for progress in the employment of women, young people and older people, for whom the employment rate drops dramatically from the age of 52-55 years, remains great.

Is not the real opportunity of this demographic challenge, the objective of full employment, which is finally realistic, finally achievable and finally necessary? To achieve it we must implement a genuine human resources management policy and a real lifelong training policy. I say lifelong with reason, for that also means for employees over 50 who, along with other types of discrimination, also have to face discrimination on training and on promotion at work.

In my report, I put forward the concept of the active life-cycle to stress the need to consider a period of active life of around forty years – though it is up to the Member States to decide – of continuous employment, training, requalification, potential promotion, from the beginning to the end of a person's active life. Before considering raising the retirement age, it is necessary to make sure that everyone below that age is able to work, to exploit their skills and professional experience.

It is because there is a legal retirement age that people can think of going beyond it, depending on the arrangements defined by each Member State in line with its traditions of dialogue and consultation. On this point, the debate remains open.

The last point I would like to mention quickly is of course the use of immigration. There is much discussion of it making up for the drop in the active population, but immigration also stirs up a great deal of tension, as you know. For this reason I recommend a clear and reasoned approach to this issue. Immigration is not a new phenomenon in the European Union and, with a positive balance of two million immigrants per year – a figure that has been stable for several years – legal immigration contributes to the composition of the active population of the European Union, just as it contributes to the composition of European society.

We need to maintain this flow of immigrants and guarantee a legal status in our Member States for those we welcome, in particular fighting illegal immigration and the exploitation of illegal workers. The human dimension of immigration must govern our policies on the subject and family integration should not disappear from our guidelines.

In a provisional conclusion to this presentation, I would like to recall that, behind the average birth rates, the age pyramids and the ratios lie the issues of birth, motherhood, the place of women in society, the care we give to our elderly and the way we ourselves wish to end our lives. That is the reason why this debate is as interesting as it is impassioned, and I would also like to thank all the shadow rapporteurs for taking as much interest in this as I have.

**Vladimír Špidla**, *Member of the Commission*. – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank all the Members of the European Parliament and above all the rapporteur, Mrs Castex, for her informative report on the Commission communication on the demographic future of Europe. I am particularly pleased by the fact that besides the Committee on Employment there were four other parliamentary committees dealing with this report: the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, and the Committee on Regional Development. This clearly gives the Member States a stronger political signal and indicates the importance of demographic issues in Europe today.

The European Parliament's analysis of the main demographic issues is to a great extent in line with the conclusions of the Commission's 2007 report. Both agree that ageing and declining birth rates are the result of social and economic development. Moreover, both Parliament and the Commission share the view that it is possible to respond to these phenomena constructively and successfully. Demographic changes present not only serious challenges but also new opportunities. The report points out, however, that it is important to respond both to the challenges and the opportunities now.

It is encouraging to see that the political response and measures outlined in the report more or less correspond to the Commission's proposals. Family policy is the sole responsibility of individual Member States. However, as the report rightly states, the European Union also has a role to play. The revised Lisbon Strategy provides a framework for modernising family policy through support for equal opportunities and above all support for initiatives aimed at attaining a better work/life balance. In this regard, we are happy to see the new European Alliance for Families, which was established at the European Council meeting in spring 2007. This Alliance represents another platform at EU level for the exchange of experience among Member States.

The report also rightly emphasises the changing relationship between the working and non-working sectors, stressing that the Member States will have to take all possible measures to deal with future shortages of workers in the labour market. They must first and foremost increase the participation in the labour market of young people, women and older people. There are a number of specific steps, which can and must be taken.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me mention migration briefly once again as it is such an important and sensitive area. It is quite clear that inward and outward migration are part and parcel of European history and the European way of life. It is vital to support integration from the start, rather than seeing migration solely as a security or policing issue. Migration is part of our European way of life and for the most part has positive and necessary effects for us all.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the issue of infertility. The European Parliament report draws attention to the increasing occurrence of infertility in couples: we know that there are some purely medical phenomena or causes of this problem, but it is also clearly connected to social conditions, in particular to couples postponing starting a family. I just want to reiterate that we must approach this issue in a coherent and comprehensive manner, not just from a medical standpoint.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a long list of people waiting to join in the debate, so I will conclude my contribution and look forward to the discussion that will follow.

**Bilyana Ilieva Raeva**, (*Rapporteur on the Commission's Opinion for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs*) – (BG) Dear Mr. Commissioner, Dear Mr. Chairman, The overall demographic picture in Europe is very alarming. According to the Eurostat forecasts, the population in the 15 to 64 age bracket will be reduced by one million persons per year after 2010. This trend is due to two factors.

Life expectancy continues to grow in all EU Member States, which is a very positive development resulting from the good quality of life in the Community. However, it is an alarming fact that, at the same time, birth rates are very low, which leads to growing share of the ageing population.

It is this situation that brings about reduction of the share of people in the active age bracket and drop in labour productivity. The demographic problem threatens the stability of the European economy, the European social model, as well as the solidarity between generations.

In this context, I commend the European Commission's initiative to develop a common European demographic strategy as the only adequate way to meet this global challenge.

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Parliament lays the emphasis on the economic tools that give opportunities to improve the demographic situation in the European Union.

The proposed texts point to several major lines of action, including: development of sustainable and balanced public finance; promotion of diverse financial instruments with guaranteed transparency and security; use of tax concessions for companies hiring aged employees; acceleration of the labour market liberalization process, or internal migration, to quote Commissioner Spidla in the enlarged EU even before 2014; encouragement of employment among young people and those with family responsibilities through innovative work schemes such as shift work, part-time work, and lifelong learning.

The emphasis is laid on the need for the Member States to fulfill their commitments under the Stability and Growth Pact as a way to overcome demographic challenges. The text includes also some more flexible mechanisms for voluntary retention of people above the minimum retirement age according to the "salary and pension" formula.

The main idea is that if we wish to live up to the demographic challenges, we have to support the establishment of mechanisms enabling flexible employment forms and to encourage the voluntary continuation of active life even after the minimum retirement age.

**Elisabeth Schroedter**, (*draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development*). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the effects of demographic change are very varied. While the outskirts of Paris are shaken time and time again by social unrest owing to the high rate of migration, in Brandenburg, where I come from, the regions are dwindling, people are moving away and the population is aging much more rapidly.

The ageing society places a burden on public budgets, with social benefits to be paid, and the Lisbon Strategy has undertaken to reduce these. However, in light of the real causes of demographic change, I wonder whether this reduction might not be counterproductive for the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission is making it fairly easy to blame women for the ageing of society, because they are not having enough children, but the real reasons are current and past political errors.

I would like to address just three of the points that have brought this imbalance in society into being. The first point is that analyses show that people do in fact want to have children, but parents – not just women – do not have children because the framework conditions are not right, because they do not have any social security, because – as has already been said – it is more difficult for parents to find employment and because career and family cannot be combined.

The solution to this would be a totally new paradigm in relation to work-life balance. The key would be to divide time for family and career equally between the sexes; the Dublin Foundation has carried out some excellent research on this. It is also vital that children are not seen as little tickets to poverty, as is the case in many Member States.

For policies of the Member States, what this means is sustainability in the social security system and, although this is an unpopular cost factor, it would put demographic change back on an even keel.

An interesting study carried out in the region that I come from illustrates the second aspect. In this study, it was established that young women were moving out of the area not because of the problems of combining work and family, but because of massive discrimination that started as soon as they left school. They are top

people, the best in the class, the top graduates, yet they are still offered places on the lower-quality training courses and poorer opportunities to advance their careers. This means, then, that the European Commission can really be effective in the area where it really has competence, that is, in matters of gender mainstreaming – equal opportunities for men and women – to combat discrimination by introducing improvements to legislation and particularly by exerting pressure on Member States to implement legislation so that things finally get moving.

Thirdly, as draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development, I would like to come back to the topic of the declining regions. In our opinion, we are critical of the way in which the state administrations are still erecting huge barriers to effective involvement by citizens and to the development of innovation and creativity. By doing this, they are hindering plans for successful regional development.

At the same time, there is a tendency for political leaders to simply write off regions, to withdraw from them claiming that the state has a responsibility to provide basic needs, to simply give up on them. This is no solution for Europe because over the long term, over generations – as history shows – it will become incredibly expensive. In reality, it is the task of the state administrations to pick up on the impetus provided by civil society and cooperate with it to pull the regions out of this dilemma.

In this connection, I call on the European Commission to pick up on input from civil society especially, to promote civil society by coordinating the exchange of experience between regions where things are going well and highlighting good examples of tried and tested practice. These are concrete solutions in which the European Commission can be active without always holding women responsible for demographic change.

**Magda Kósáné Kovács**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.* – (HU) Thank you, Mr President. For decades, we have been learning that climate change and pollution of the environment threaten our future. The Hampton Court summit drew our attention to another process that is becoming risky: Europe is growing old.

Based on the responsibility it feels in this area, the LIBE Committee made three recommendations to the rapporteur and the EMPLOI Committee on matters relating to civil rights. I would like to thank them for studying our recommendations and taking them into account.

The first area is support for families and children. Legislating on family support systems falls under national jurisdiction, and yet the assumption of obligations in respect of families with children is also a moral question, and an important part of European values. Equal opportunities for families with and without children are an extremely important Community interest. The basis for ensuring the rights of children, however, is that future generations should also feel responsible for the world outside the family.

After analysing the legal and illegal forms of migration, LIBE has drawn attention to the fact that the requirements of an ageing society and of the labour market require a consistent, complex migration policy. We are delighted that the report goes into this in detail.

In the year of cultural diversity, I might add that, according to experts and science, there may be a direct relationship between migration and the rate of population growth, since the large number of children in second-generation immigrant families is falling, while the presence of immigrants may change the desire of the host population to have children.

Ultimately, discrimination against the elderly and older workers may prevent people who are not young from staying in the labour market. I would like to emphasise that they cannot be forced to work longer, they must have a real opportunity to choose, and lifelong learning is necessary for this. Familiarisation with modern communications technology improves their chances of finding work and opens windows to the global world of elderly people.

In its opinion, LIBE asked the Commission repeatedly to make a recommendation on a general anti-discrimination directive, and we hope that this report will speed up the process. Thank you, Mr President.

**Karin Resetarits**, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.* – (DE) Mr President, indeed, why are we women having fewer children? The multitude of reasons and proposed political solutions are contained in the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. My fellow Member Mrs Castex has already successfully incorporated almost all of it in her report. Thank you, Mrs Castex.

How, then, can we help women to fulfil their desire to have children? Firstly, equal pay for equal work! That is the only way both parents will have an equal say when they decide who takes parental leave after the birth of a child.

Secondly, both parents are equally responsible for bringing up their children. We need fathers' help. Without the support of the father of my four children, it would be impossible for me to work here.

Thirdly, employers must facilitate parental leave for their employees, with support from the state if necessary. A country that wants children must put children at the centre of its policymaking.

Fourthly, we need high-quality childcare and a child-friendly environment, no matter what the parents' income. Anyone who does not agree does not deserve to hear the laughter of children.

**President.** – Thank you very much. May I also thank you on behalf of all fathers for that speech.

We shall continue the discussion, and in this section the discussion will be opened on behalf of the political groups by Mr Fatuzzo, on behalf of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats. Three minutes, if you would be so kind.

**Carlo Fatuzzo, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to speak on this occasion, first to compliment the chairman of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Jan Andersson, for presenting this own-initiative report by the committee, so brilliantly and vehemently written by Mrs Castex in a series of consultations, with the participation of all the members of the committee – some in a particular way – and after nine years as an MEP, I would also like to say: at last we have a report in Parliament that talks about pensioners and the elderly! Indeed, it mentions them a great deal. Tomorrow morning, in my explanation of vote, I will tell you how many times the words pensioner and elderly appear in this report.

It also talks about other things, of course, about the birth rate, about children and about skills training, but I want to highlight this, Mr President: why are we finally talking about the elderly? I am convinced that this is because all the governments are very concerned because having so many elderly compared with so few workers means paying much more for pensions, paying much more for healthcare than in the past.

Just look back 20 years, 10 years, 30 years, 50 years, nobody bothered to think that the elderly needed assistance, that the elderly needed support, that people with elderly parents needed more time off work than in the past. We are beginning to talk about pension schemes, and we are beginning to say there should be more children, and that mothers should be given more help. Did we need this cataclysm to happen, which was compared with climate change by someone who spoke before me?

From bad things, Mr President, I believe good things come, because what I see in this report I approve of wholeheartedly. Finally Europe, in the person of the European Parliament, is showing us how really to be a State. I hope Member States follow this example.

**Jan Andersson, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (SV) Mr President, Commissioner, I want to begin by thanking the rapporteur who has done tremendously good groundwork but also has managed the negotiations between the different political groups excellently.

As someone said earlier, this is a big challenge. Not a threat, but a challenge for the European Union. I will try to keep to the three main areas that form the structure of the rapporteur's report.

First of all, birth rate. We have too low birth rates in Europe and I share the view that this is due, to a large extent, to inadequate political decision-making. It relates to men and women today wanting to be, and being needed, on the labour market but, at the same time, wanting to become parents and have children. We must encourage this combination in the Member States so that parents, both men and women – and this is important to stress – can combine their working life and parenthood. It relates to compensation for parenthood based on the principle of loss of income, linked to working life, at a high level so that people can stay at home and not need to suffer financially.

Secondly, we need to expand high-quality childcare. We have a long way to go. We have targets, but few Member States meet the targets for the expansion of childcare at present.

Then it concerns older people on the labour market. It is a paradox that we enter working life later and leave it sooner. We must create conditions with various measures in relation to health and safety at work, the

possibility of further training, and flexible solutions in the grey area between working life and retirement, in order to enable parents to remain in work.

Lastly, migration. We need people who come from other parts of the world in our society in order to develop and maintain our welfare society. We must therefore create an integration policy where they are integrated into our society and are not excluded. We must assist that policy, as there is no conflict with our welfare society. On the contrary, it is a prerequisite for developing it.

**Elizabeth Lynne**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, this has been a difficult report. There has unfortunately been very little time to reach compromises or for real debate on some of the issues – hence the large number of amendments.

However, I am pleased with many elements of what we do have, such as the need to tackle the issue of elder abuse. More needs to be done, urgently, to end the physical, financial, emotional and other forms of abuse regularly suffered by older people. The latest estimate puts the number of older people that have suffered abuse at over 10%, which is a staggering figure. That is why I welcome the Commission's intention to bring forward a communication on that issue. But we must do more. Member States must also work towards ensuring independence, free personal care, lifelong learning and freedom from discrimination at the workplace for all older people. That means, of course, fully implementing the 2000 Employment Directive and then building on it.

We must work to put an end to employees being thrown onto the employment scrapheap, whether at 50, 55 or 65. An arbitrary age of statutory retirement must be abolished, whilst ensuring a statutory pension age, set at Member State level. There is a very clear difference between the two. Individuals then have a choice to stop work and take their pensions, or to continue working and either take their pension or defer it until they choose to stop working. Unfortunately, I was unable to achieve consensus on this, and therefore it is not in the report, but I believe Member States must be encouraged to look at this for the future.

I have tabled a number of amendments on behalf of my group, which I hope other Members will see fit to support, but most of the issues covered by this report should remain within the competence of the Member States. There is, of course, still a great deal we can do in terms of exchange of best practice.

**Jan Tadeusz Masiel**, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Mr President, as the rapporteur correctly observes, the demographic situation depends on natural population growth, average life span and migration flows. I would add a fourth consolidating element to this dynamic, in the form of interpersonal relations and the political will that influences them.

Man is a particularly demanding and difficult animal, who does not just reproduce when the time is right, but must additionally have suitable and proper conditions for doing so. The 20th century, and especially the years following World War II, did not fill mankind with particular optimism and a desire for procreation. It was as if the world did not appear sufficiently interesting to man to prompt him to bring children into existence.

Today the time has come, now that we have understood the causes of the pessimistic demographic picture of Europe's future, to begin putting the situation to rights. Immigration, as it appears from the report, is not an adequate solution to the problem. Above all, we need to create appealing conditions for Europeans that offer an incentive to quicken natural growth. I support all the solutions proposed in the report, and I would place an emphasis on two.

Care such as we have never before provided should be lavished on the family, and especially on women, who not only devote their time to motherhood, but also look after ill and elderly family members. This work demands to be covered by a special occupational status linked to remuneration. Furthermore, each child must have a guaranteed place at a crèche and at pre-school following the mother's return to work.

Finally, demography is a problem that is, among other things, political, and we are politicians; we are in a position to rectify this poor state of affairs.

**Ilda Figueiredo**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) It is true that there are demographic changes in the population of EU Member States which it is important to take into account but, in the analysis made, it is not sufficient to say that there is a falling birth rate and the population is ageing. The analysis needs to be taken further, seeking the causes and indicating measures which do not jeopardise mankind's progress and all that civilization has achieved to date.



Thus we must not compromise the advances attained through applying scientific progress in order to improve people's living conditions in terms of preventive medicine, better healthcare, nutrition and housing, reduced working hours, and support for mothers, fathers and children, which has resulted in constant and regular increases in life expectancy.

The existence of public policies in fundamental social areas, in particular universally accessible public services, especially in the areas of health and education, has made a decisive contribution. The fact that workers' achievements as regards organisation and working time, improved health and safety conditions in the workplace and progress on work breaks and holidays, proper wages and secure jobs have been enshrined in law has also been very important.

However, increasingly neoliberal policies, whose essential instruments are the Lisbon Strategy, the Stability Pact and the guidelines of the European Central Bank, have led to the liberalisation and privatisation of public services and an increase in precarious employment, which particularly affects women. The rise in the retirement age is making it even more difficult for young people to find employment with rights, and universal access to public services and proper housing has also become more difficult.

These factors all tend to reduce the birth rate. That is why we need to change policy as a matter of urgency. That is why we need to replace the Lisbon Strategy with a European strategy for solidarity and sustainable development that opens new horizons for Europe, of decent jobs with rights, in particular for women and young people, reduced working hours with no reduction in pay, better salaries, an end to discrimination, particularly wage discrimination against women, greater economic and social cohesion, adequate protection, and public and universal social security, guaranteeing a better quality of life and greater social justice.

Hence the urgency of creating more, better and affordable facilities for childcare and for the care of dependent persons and of making public pre-school education generally available free of charge, so as to promote good working conditions which make it possible to reconcile work and family life. This in turn requires stable employment and working hours, and respect for the social role of mothers and fathers.

That is also why it is necessary to allocate greater budgetary resources to less developed countries and why all Member States urgently need to ratify and apply the UN Convention on family reunification for migrant workers.

**Kathy Sinnott, on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.** – Mr President, this is a report on preparing for demographic change. Does this mean we are giving up and accepting the dire prediction in the 2005 Green Paper?

When that paper came out we saw it as a challenge to change. Among other things, we wanted to find a way to enable women to have the number of children that women said they wanted. Are we now throwing in the towel?

Our desire to raise birth rates is undermined by our policies. Our competitive strategy is based on increasing consumerism. Yet consumerism can be a deterrent to having children. In consumerism we are taught to be selfish. Look at the advertisements. Pamper yourself; have it all; buy.

For most people, having children and a family is the opposite. It demand selflessness, sharing and putting others first. As we become consumers we increasingly ask, can we afford a child? And we weigh up the cost of a child against the cost of getting ahead or a social life or a car or a house or a vacation. The child often loses with the potential parents saying either 'no, thank you,' or 'not yet'.

And of course we must tackle infertility. But with over four million abortions a year in Europe, we cannot really say that our falling birth rate is primarily about infertility.

I asked my intern to read this report and she made an interesting comment. Where are the men? If we want to talk about gender equality and demography, we need to talk about both genders being equally and fully responsible for rearing children. For many valid reasons, we have had to emphasise the cause of women. But have we reached a point where we have sidelined men? Raising a child is an enormous task. Although we must give all the help we can to single mothers and their babies, the state is at best a poor substitute for a caring, supportive and, dare I say it, protective father.

Many women do not want to undertake motherhood without an involved father. Security is important in motherhood but financial security is not the whole story. We must encourage an emotional environment that is conducive to having children. Our culture needs to encourage men to step up to the plate.

More than anything, having children is about our closest relationships which is why more and more childcare – though useful in getting women into the workplace – will not help increase the birth rate. To rectify our demographic crisis we must restore the basic integrity of human relationships. We must foster trust, patience, fidelity and love. Only in this atmosphere can men and women feel happy and secure enough to start a family and with real support for this family and family life, we will see an increase in births, plus the revitalisation of Europe.

**Thomas Mann (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, the European Union is facing demographic change as never before. By 2030 we will be lacking more than 20 million people of employable age. Two employed people will have to pay for one pensioner. The good news is that people will live longer, and today's elderly people are healthier than previous generations. The bad news is that the younger generation is too few in number and this will have dramatic consequences for urban planning, the construction of dwellings, the education system and the way work is organised.

We need a more family-friendly environment in our Member States, more childcare choices, more workplace daycare centres, better opportunities for combining family and work, greater participation by women in the working world, more part-time work for parents and a secure return to work after child raising. Above all, we need stable career development paths and sufficient income, because these make it easier for people to want to have children.

We also need significantly greater investment in people, to improve general education and specialist training levels. Lifelong learning programmes should benefit not only young people but also older people, who will want to work for much longer and who can manage a solid workload and are highly skilled and highly motivated.

We should not expect too much of Mrs Castex's own-initiative report. The legal status of social services of general interest remains controversial. We are against an EU-wide framework directive or binding regulations. Furthermore, company pensions that have been established on a voluntary basis should not be burdened with additional obligations, such as, for example, criteria relating to family policy. This is a question of social security, a question of taxes, and therefore a classic matter for the Member States.

With these considerations and the amendments proposed by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, the report has become more substantial. With this report, we can hold a discussion of the necessary breadth about the consequences of the dramatic demographic changes.

**Alejandro Cercas (PSE).** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you very much for attending this very interesting debate. I would also like to thank Mrs Castex for producing this report and for enabling us to go deeper in a discussion that is helping us a great deal.

In a country such as mine – Spain – which is going through a demographic crisis that, if possible, is more serious than the average in the European Union, this type of communication from the Commission and this type of debate are very helpful, because this is a deep-rooted, structural problem rather than a short-term situation, and these things take the problem out of the national political debate and make it much broader, with greater capacity for analysis and response.

Indeed, as the Commissioner said, we are facing a problem, but we also have an opportunity. The opportunity should materialise through tackling this problem, not only in its effects – that there are more elderly people in Europe, that Europe is ageing – but also in its causes.

We need to prevent Europe from ageing, because we are not going to avoid having more elderly people: science and medicine have brought us to this point and progress will continue to be made. The problem, as other Members have said, is that we need birth policies, demographic policies and we need children in Europe, that is what we need. We need to work in all areas, but with the understanding that it is a serious and fine problem that we are going to pass on to future generations if we do not lay the foundations for solving it now.

I am among those who believe that Europe's social model is not the problem, but on the contrary it could be the solution.

The ageing of Europe and the low birth rate in Europe would be even more serious without our social system. Other societies such as, for example, China, where they are going to experience something very similar, are going to pay even more dearly than us for the lack of efficient, intelligent and rational social models.

Because, in short, the problem is going to be that change is inevitable and we are going to have to change. Our social system can change its techniques without changing its values. I think that the fundamental issues are solidarity, reconciling family and work life (to give fresh opportunities for families to produce new generations) welcoming immigrants, not as a burden, not as something that is negative for our societies, but as a phenomenon which, if we are able to integrate it, is once again going to help us to tackle this problem. Finally, there needs to be a major discussion about the role of women in our society, a discussion that needs to be conducted, as always, in the light of solidarity.

*(Applause)*

**Siiri Oviir (ALDE).** – *(ET)* Commissioner, Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the average birth-rate in Europe today is 1.5, but this means that there is no population growth. The Member States have studied the situation and their inquiries show that on average people would like to have two or three children. It is clear that there is a mismatch between people's wishes and the reality.

This is the 21st century and women long ago stopped being satisfied with the role of housewife and child-carer. They are educated, they want to work and have careers; the income they receive from work provides a better standard of living for their families. However, we must be able to influence the birth rate, and to establish a situation in which the number of children a family wants to have becomes a reality. Our families need a sense of security that the birth of a child will not shatter a career, in other words there needs to be a better balance between work and family life, for both mothers and fathers.

Parents want to enjoy a sense of certainty that they can provide their children with a good education and with the skills to pursue their interests, with the material support of the State where necessary. Without this sense of security people will not have children. Immigration as a means of increasing population is a naive route to take. It is only a partial, short-term approach. We should pay more attention to innovation, not immigration.

Time will not permit me to talk about all the factors but I should like to emphasise that the demographic situation depends greatly on a gamut of decisions and legal rules in fields ranging from labour and family law to environmental law and national security. In conclusion I would like to thank Mrs Castex for her important report which contains a great deal of female empathy.

**Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, the draft resolution once more draws attention to the demographic threat facing Europe. Responsibility for the future of our continent, and for its social and economic development, demands that special attention be given to this issue. A birth rate of about 1.5 on average is too low. In order to guarantee a simple replacement of generations, this figure must exceed 2.15.

Promotion of model families with a small number of children or none, conditions of family life that do not guarantee a decent and stable economic situation (as a result of the impact of unemployment and lowered employment standards, particularly as regards the duration of employment) and punishment of women for motherhood through pension systems have undoubtedly contributed to the threats that have arisen. The ageing of society, which stems to a significant extent from the otherwise positive phenomenon of longer human life, but also from the deteriorating ratio between the number of people who are gainfully employed and the number of pensioners, is causing major financial problems for pension systems. In this situation, action must be taken to bring about change.

I am, however, going to dissent from the conviction to be found in the report that this problem will be resolved for us by migration movements. Studies carried out in Poland by the Institute for Market Economics indicate that the boost to population numbers achieved by this method will be barely 2-3%, in other words far too small. This method also gives rise to social problems, as can currently be seen in Denmark, France and Germany. Integration processes take a long time.

I would like to draw your attention at this point to the report's suggestions regarding rights for the families of economic migrants. The amendments that I have proposed result from a lack of precision regarding whether this means family in the sense of the law of the emigrant's country of birth, or of the country that is accepting the emigrant. I am particularly concerned about potential polygamy and the legal and economic consequences arising therefrom in the case of social services being made available to these families. I would also like...

*(The President cut off the speaker.)*

**Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, the word ‘integration’ has been used 24 times in this report. The proposed integration of immigrants out of the national taxpayers’ pocket has not taken into consideration one important aspect, namely religion and civilisation. Militant secularists of socialist origin avoid this subject, although the Muslim population is shooting up.

By 2025, one in three people living in Western Europe may, or will, be Muslim. The Archbishop of Canterbury has recently suggested that Europe should adopt Sharia law, which the President and the establishment of this Parliament would probably call ‘multiculturalism’. This brings a confused debate to the fore that has been developing over the ways and possibility of integrating and assimilating the new immigrants flooding into the continent.

Does assimilation mean that immigrants should absorb and be absorbed into European civilisation, or does it mean that they should join the descendants of old European nations to create some sort of new European man? Or is the creation of a common civilisation either undesirable or impossible?

Although Europe has always had its full share of varying cultures, it has also had a mainstream Christian culture or civilisation, so to speak, in which most of its people, whatever their identities, have shared. For almost 20 centuries, this civilisation has been the central and the lasting component of the European legacy. One has to ask: would Europe would be the Europe it is today if, in the seventh and eighth centuries, the ashes of ancient Rome had been conquered and settled not by Christian societies but by Muslim and any other? The simple answer is no. It would not be Europe. It would be Egypt or Libya.

Fortunately, there are people who will not accept cultural rights as a cover for Sharia. Religion should be protected from the State – the European State, in particular. It is only Christianity that can integrate other religions into a shared European project, by acknowledging what secular ideologies cannot. I believe that Europe can do that and Europeans should recommit themselves to Christian culture and the traditions and values of liberty, equality, law and individual rights that, for over 20 centuries, have been embraced by Europeans of all nations and that have been the source of prosperity and moral leadership in the world.

This report can integrate nobody and nothing. It is a symbol of dead men walking. It might create a continent of zombies, unaware of their national identities.

**José Albino Silva Peneda (PPE-DE).** – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, increased life expectancy and a constantly falling birth rate will mean that the current European demographic dependency index will rise from the current 49% to 59% by 2025 and 77% by 2050.

Thus the European Union is facing an unprecedented problem, since in the future European cities will have a very high proportion of old people and society will therefore be very different from what we have today.

That trend will mean there will have to be profound changes in important aspects of public policies. In addition to social security, there will need to be changes in health and care services, tax policy, spatial planning, immigration, security, culture, tourism, leisure, and so on.

Financing of pension schemes will also have to be rethought, so that it is no longer predominantly State-based, and even if it is, contributions will not come almost exclusively from wages.

Given the far-reaching consequences of demographic change, it needs to be considered from the point of view of the public administration and the social fabric, requiring the mobilisation of all economic, cultural and social operators in a structured analysis and debate on the various options as regards the measures to be taken. Hence the value of this report.

Once again we are facing an area where it is essential and urgent to step up social dialogue; indeed there is no other way to tackle this issue.

I agree with the Commission’s statement that boosting the birth rate, in view of the urgency and scale of the matter, will entail the setting of a long-term strategy. That is the only way we shall be able to take preventive action and, at the same time, help the European Union to seize the opportunities which fall within a policy to boost the birth rate.

**Harald Ettl (PSE).** – (DE) Mr President, today, at this late hour, we are discussing a report that deals with Europe’s demographic future, with the public virtually excluded. The rapporteur deserves the highest praise for this report because in it she has dealt with our existential societal, political and social questions. The result

should make compulsory reading for all MEPs who hide behind the day-to-day pragmatics of politics and ignorance of reality.

The report reveals how and where the chill of the economy and the rat race can be combated with social warmth. Predictions of the way things will develop are there too, to open our eyes and develop a political philosophy of an inclusive society. That relates to the ever-changing question of what constitutes a family, which needs to be revised, and the fact that in today's well-off society, having children is connected with the fear of poverty.

In industrial firms – and this is par for the course – parental leave is denied by macho managers who have never had a social life. In addition, it is impossible to count the number of employment relationships and workplaces that make people wonder whether children are 'affordable'.

The additional measures listed in the report are necessary in order to turn a demographic development into a 'win-win' situation. One thing is certain: the society of tomorrow will look different. Whether generational conflict will become a socio-political apocalypse and potentiate the possibility of conflict between rich and poor depends on the here and now, and whether politicians are prepared to think politically and work sociopolitically.

This report is more than a bad weather forecast that we can put up with today because things might improve tomorrow. This report is a clear call to change and develop our society, and most particularly it is an opportunity to improve our personal understanding of society. My thanks to the rapporteur once again.

**Jean Marie Beaupuy (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, as Mr Ettl said, we are facing a great challenge. All our fellow citizens have now realised that the climate is a challenge. Few have realised that democracy is a challenge.

However, having said that, where is the demographic problem in Europe located? In the towns, of course, since 80% of the population is concentrated in towns. What is the issue for citizens today living in towns, and for mayors, since I know other fellow Members, MEPs like me, are also the mayors or deputy mayors of their towns?

Let me take two sets of examples. A set of economic examples on the one hand. Where towns either have to accommodate a large population or, as in certain towns in East Germany, watch many of their inhabitants leave, in the second instance this means unoccupied housing, unused roads, districts heated for no reason, empty schools and, in the first it means building a school for EUR 5 million, as I have just done in my town, or a new neighbourhood centre for EUR 7 million. These represent economic expenditure that has to be borne by the towns and by the towns' taxpayers.

However, this is not just an economic challenge, it is also a human one because, in these neighbourhoods, when you see people who are isolated, when the whole neighbourhood is ageing, when you cannot hear the happy shouts of children playing in the street any more, that is a human relations problem. There are jobs that nobody wants, as you know. You cannot find a plumber in some small towns. We do not have enough nurses any more in my town. We do not have enough home helps any more, so people have to wait. Instead of having two hours' help per day, we only get one. This is a serious human problem.

Commissioner, going beyond the report by my fellow Member, Mrs Castex, which I will be delighted to vote for tomorrow, I would ask you, in my capacity as chairman of the Urban Housing Intergroup, to put forward a proposal on towns for us, so a chart can be set up in the near future for each town that enables us better to understand and control the demographic situation in our towns in the medium and long term, so decisions can be taken on housing, transport, schools, etc.

**Wojciech Roszkowski (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, the report under discussion is proof of the EU's powerlessness even to evaluate the situation. We are on board a demographic Titanic, and no-one has even asked the orchestra to start playing, yet here we are, holding debates of such crucial importance in the evening, when the audience is at a minimum.

We have a demographic crisis in the EU. While the report talks of changes, the argument of Recital F clearly contradicts that of paragraph 1. There is talk of women's infertility, but what about that of men? There is talk about the infertility of couples, as if homosexual couples could be fertile. There is talk of infertility, but nothing is said about abortion being the main cause of falling population numbers in Europe. In the last 50 years, about 75 million abortions have been carried out in the 27 Member States. Were it not for that, the population of the European Union would be 15% greater, and we would not have a crisis.

In the EU we are always talking about rights, and never about duties, or about duties with regard to the future. This can only be described as adults entering a second childhood. That is why we have a crisis: children cannot have offspring, and neither can old people, but without offspring there is no future.

**Csaba Óry (PPE-DE).** – (HU) Thank you, Mr President. The report on the demographic future of Europe is an important report, since it deals with solving crucial problems such as stopping the ageing of society, increasing the desire to have children, improving the balance of work and family life, employment opportunities for women, care of the elderly, provision for the needy alongside work, and not least the matter of the long-term sustainability and financial viability of the great social welfare systems.

At the centre of these questions are the family, the question of the division of labour within the family, a husband and wife working at the same time, provision for and educating more and more children, and continuing to provide and care for elderly dependants. How can adult members be encouraged to work and have children at the same time? And we must also see that we would like to encourage active old age at the level of Union policy at the same time, that is to say, by making employment alongside a pension attractive, pushing the age limit a little further within the scope of what is possible and reducing early-retirement pensions through indirect incentives.

We can only achieve these objectives, which depend on one another, if we pay particular attention to two considerations: supporting families and improving people's state of health. It is clear that we can only count on increasing the desire of the elderly to work if they are suitably healthy and are capable of continuous employment without any obvious problems.

It is unfortunate that many Member States are withholding and reducing health grants for budgetary reasons, and that more and more burdens are being placed on workers, including the elderly and needy. This is the wrong direction. It does not help to implement the Lisbon Strategy, and it does not help to solve demographic problems either. The situation is similar with regard to family support systems, and here too we need to increase them, rather than withhold and reduce them. Thank you very much, Mr President.

**Rovana Plumb (PSE).** – (RO) Mr. President, Mr. Commissioner, dear colleagues, the Castex report is very important for the future of Europe and I would like to congratulate Madam Rapporteur for its content.

A correct demographic policy involves a basic matter: we should not establish for the future generations tasks that are almost impossible to solve, taking into consideration the conditions predicted for the next decades. Briefly, we have to find solutions adapted to the present, but especially to the future.

The European demographics are a problem all over the Union, and I would like to draw attention to the fact that the region I have the honour of representing has acute problems in this field. Indeed, the social-cultural reality resulting from the long communist experience has directly influenced the demographic processes of the Eastern European countries, Romania being a specific case.

The answer to the demographic challenge is simple at first glance: the Member States need to rapidly revise their demographic policies in order to eliminate the negative consequences of the decrease in population and demographic aging. Although the solutions are not always as simple as the questions, I would like to emphasize the importance of item 10 in the report, which requests the Member States to adopt measures in order to create quality and affordable child care services, in compliance with the Barcelona objectives, so that, by 2010, the Member States should create services that will allow taking care of at least 90% of the children aged between 3 and the school-age and at least 33% of the children younger than 3 years of age. It is a generous and necessary objective at the same time.

I consider that providing direct financial support in the form of cash is a solution, but only for the moment, this is why emphasis should be laid on providing support to the parent in a relationship with the employer and on quality and affordable services for child care and education, for the purpose of ensuring balance of the family and professional life. The European institutions and the Member States have started to become aware of the importance of demographic policies, but this is not enough. We need a first step, an exact record of the demographic situation in the European Union.

*(The President interrupts the orator)*

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Mr President, first of all, I would like to say 'well done' to the rapporteur. This is a very comprehensive report on a major issue for the EU: dealing with the demographic challenge.

I would like to mention just two areas covered in this report: the situation of carers, in particular family carers, and the issue of pensions. In the context of carers, the report reminds Member States of the multiple disadvantages faced by carers and also asks that greater support be offered to carers, in particular the right of access to flexible or part-time work. This will facilitate carers in making choices and having a reasonable work-life balance.

Indeed, the recent preliminary ruling by the Court of Justice supporting the case for constructive dismissal brought by a carer in the UK would indicate that the Court of Justice may be thinking along the same lines.

This report also stresses that access to adequate services for those who need care plays an important role in ensuring the full and equal participation of men and women in the labour force. This will help us in achieving the Lisbon objectives. However, adequate services should, of course, be provided in any case.

The report also highlights the massive disparity in average occupational pension between men and women. This is often due to career breaks taken to care for children or elderly relatives. And the report calls on Member States to take action to ensure that work breaks for maternity, paternity and parental leave do not constitute a penalty when pension rights are being calculated.

It is crucial that today's carers, many of whom operate on a 24/7 basis, are not the next generation of older, poor people. In order to ensure this does not happen, Member States must take action to deal with the issue of pensions for carers. It would be totally unacceptable if those who carry the burden of caring were to be denied an adequate pension.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, when I was at primary school, 100 million Europeans were aged 14 or under, like me. When I am an ancient 87-year-old, there will be just 66 million children of that age in Europe. At present, one in four European citizens is over 65, and in 40 years' time one in two Europeans will be in that pensionable age group.

Let us remember that these numbers are not just dry statistics. This alone will cause a massive rise in public spending and benefits. In Europe, including in my country, we have a demographic crisis. If we look back 100 years, one in six or seven citizens of the world was European, but in 40 years' time one in 20 people will live on our continent.

What, then, should we do? Promote motherhood, create economic incentives for having children, including tax breaks, support large families – but one thing we clearly must do is treat infertility. Today we complain and end up talking about the problem of immigrants, but the source of these difficulties lies in the demographic decline of the European peoples.

**Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE-DE).** – (SK) Mr President, Commissioner, I find it worrying that the birth rate has been falling for several years now and that the indications are that by 2050 there will be a change in the population structure of the European Union. Not only will the overall population of the European Union grow old; there will also be a shortage of people of a productive age. As a result, the Union will face a loss of competitiveness compared with regions recording significant demographic growth.

The demographic imbalance could then affect the financing of social welfare and pension systems. However, this situation is nothing new and the present adverse demographic changes force us to ask important questions; when looking for solutions to the changes we have to analyse their causes and consequences. In my view, one of the main causes for this demographic winter are the adverse conditions and trends that are trying to weaken the traditional family unit of a man and a woman, the role of motherhood in women's life, the role of men as children's fathers, the economic and social benefits for families with several children, etc.

As a father and as a doctor of medicine I welcome those sections of the report that talk about protecting motherhood and providing socio-economic support for families and activities that will enable men and women to better reconcile their family and working lives. I also agree with the pragmatic and rational approach to immigration policy. I just want to mention that, as far as I am concerned, a rational immigration policy means manning those posts that have long been unmanned in the EU Member States. It is precisely in this area that we need a well-considered and well-prepared European policy. When applying the so-called Blue Card system, Europe should choose, as part of the immigration process, only people who are qualified and who can work in those professions in which our market is lacking manpower.

Another positive aspect is, in my opinion, the possibility of adoption for infertile couples, and creating good conditions for foster families. (I am about to finish.) However, I do not agree with the promotion of assisted reproduction as an option for infertility treatment since...

**Joel Hasse Ferreira (PSE).** – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the question of Europe's demographic future has merited significant attention from this Parliament. In Lisbon, I advocated, together with my colleague, Edite Estrela, a public hearing on demography and solidarity between generations during the debate on the Bushill-Matthews report. The report by Mrs Castex, for which I congratulate her, falls within a broader perspective – that of the demographic future of Europe.

The challenges of solidarity are not just between generations, but also between regions, and cover the integration of migrants, human resource policies and, of course, the challenge of demographic renewal.

Such demographic renewal, ladies and gentlemen, involves considering the importance of childcare facilities, which make it easier for parents to enter the labour market and help to combat poverty, particularly for one-parent families.

It is also important, however, to take into account that some of the objectives aptly laid down in Barcelona in this and other fields, have not yet been achieved in various countries; I would stress greater participation by women in working life and support for employment for the over 55s.

From the tax point of view, too, it is important for Member States to reflect upon the possibility of promoting effective measures to boost the birth rate, in order to reduce the financial constraints on choosing to have more children.

Let us be clear, it is still important that workers should be able, if they so wish, to prolong their working life within the existing legal framework of each Member State, but the right to a pension at the legal age must be safeguarded. It is, of course, essential to work towards greater sustainability of social security systems.

The future of Europe in population terms has much to do with immigration from the south, and therefore the education systems need to take into account the needs of immigrants and their families, so that they can feel happy and fulfilled in the various EU Member States.

In conclusion: the demographic future of Europe depends also upon us, the European Parliament. I am sure we shall measure up to our responsibilities.

**Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański (UEN).** – (PL) The demographic future of Europe is a long-term problem. Europe is ageing rapidly. We are threatened by a diminution in the working-age population, a fall in economic competitiveness and a decrease in funding for social care and keeping pension systems in equilibrium.

The great expansion of the European Union and the migration of people from the new Member States to the old Member States in search of earnings have relieved this problem in Western Europe, but have not solved it. Europe's ageing process continues and decisive action is needed in the following areas, among others: protection of human rights and employment rights, promotion of a pro-family policy, medical care and social aid, and improvements in human resources management, and immigrants must be included in this. These steps will produce the desired result only as long as globalisation processes do not destroy mankind and the family, and as long as the highest value is actually man and not capital.

**Anna Záborská (PPE-DE).** – (SK) Europe is facing a significantly negative demographic trend indicating that within 50 years vast demographic changes will take place in the Union. A falling birth rate, gradual ageing and dying out of population are the most serious problems today. Under certain circumstances there is even a threat of the end of European civilisation. We need to be truthful when discussing the reasons for this situation.

During the last 50 years or so, tens of millions of inhabitants of Europe have not been born because pregnancies ended in artificial abortions. Young people have not been brought up to behave responsibly in sexual matters; sexual freedom is a typical feature of today's society. There has also been a rise in marital breakdowns during the last 50 years, divorce, incomplete families, and more and more children born outside marriage. Add to this enormous devaluation of the value of a child: for example, what percentage of the cost of one or two cars can an entrepreneur write off as tax annually and how much of the cost of a child can a parent write off? Our social policy rewards those who have few children or none at all and concentrate primarily on their working careers. We have a social policy that forces families with several children into poverty and dependency on State benefits. The State is the main, decisive body involved in judging and redistributing, and in pursuing intergenerational solidarity through tax and social legislation. The media and society put women under enormous pressure, making them believe that only the work they carry out as part of their jobs has any value and purpose. Childbirth and bringing up a child are still seen as a necessary evil. Motherhood has practically no value. In monetary terms its value is not even expressed by a minimum wage.



There are certainly other causes but those mentioned above are those that have destroyed Europe's demography. Only by eliminating them can we again make Europe the continent of the future and hope, because a continent without children is a continent without a future.

**Edite Estrela (PSE).** – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, I should like to begin by thanking Mrs Castex for her excellent work.

Demographic change is a great challenge for Europe. A hundred years ago the population of Europe represented 15% of the world's population. In 2050 it is likely to account for only 5%. Each woman in the European Union has, on average, 1.5 children, which is below the figure of 2.1 children required to sustain the population.

The situation is serious and is going to have negative consequences for the economy, social security systems and the very composition of society.

It is therefore necessary to take measures such as the ones recently adopted in Portugal with an investment of more than EUR 100 million to provide crèches and nursery schools throughout the country, going beyond the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. The granting of a pre-natal allowance to the most needy pregnant women, family allowances for immigrants' children, extension of maternity leave, a 20% increase in family allowance for one-parent families, tax benefits for businesses which install or subsidise crèches for their employees, the setting up of a maternity benefit, public support for medically assisted procreation – are good examples for other countries to follow.

**Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (PPE-DE).** – (EL) Commissioner, no doubt everything my fellow Members are repeating to you will induce you to include the demographic problem among the most fundamental issues in the new social agenda – and we expect to receive it as your proposal for 2008.

With the planned life-cycle approach, demographic development is linked to the necessity of monitoring and forecasting needs for future skills to create dynamic human capital in the employment market. This is needed to boost hopes of maintaining the comparative advantage of the EU's developmental capabilities.

I congratulate Mrs Castex on her patience in carrying out such a difficult assessment. We can see in her report an unbroken chain of problems set out in summary form. Horizontal actions will provide the solution.

In the spirit of the Commission communication, a presentation has been given of the problems that demand good practice at national, regional and local level in a range of sectors. The first necessity here, as we have already heard so many times, is to reinforce intergenerational solidarity through multi-faceted material and moral support of the family. This should be the case wherever the family may be – in a city or a remote village; its members, whatever their age or origin, and whether they are locals or immigrants, should all benefit.

The fact that families live in a Member State must permit them to develop their capacities as sources of wealth production. Families are at the heart of development: they provide labour, consume goods and produce new dynamic members. What is needed for the creation of new families is a guarantee of legal security, the safeguarding of policy continuity and, above all, honest dialogue in the public and private sectors.

**Corina Crețu (PSE).** – (RO) Dear colleagues, first of all I would like to specify the quality of Mrs. Castex's report, a report on a decisive theme for the future of the European social model, as well as for the economic growth in the European Union area. I would also like to welcome the presence of Commissioner Spidla and his inclination towards social matters. I thank Mrs. Castex, especially for the attention given to the woman's status and her dignity, compliance with her civic rights and freedoms.

I don't need to remember here the dramas lived by the women in Romania during the communist period, when abortion was illegal, the human tragedies generated by the abortions the Romanian women initiated for themselves with primitive means. The film that won the 2007 Cannes Palme d'Or Award, directed by a Romanian, Cristian Mungiu, offered a real image of this veritable national trauma Romanian dealt with, a situation that seems difficult to understand, I know, in a normal world.

Eastern European countries experienced a true demographic shock after the fall of the communism. For more than one and a half decades, the demographic increase was negative and we timidly witness a slow change of this situation. Nevertheless, in general, there are many things to be done in order to change this situation in the European Union countries, and the measures proposed in the report seem adequate to me and they should be adopted by the national governments and supported by the Commission.

Another aspect I would like to mention refers to the pension system. All over Europe, the young people's age for entering the labour market has upsettingly increased, at the same time with the decrease in the retirement age. Several countries complain about the fact that they have a labour force deficit on the one hand and, on the other hand, people around 50 years of age retire or can no longer find a job. I appreciate the measures proposed in the report in relation to this problem as well.

**Rumiana Jeleva (PPE-DE).** – (BG) Mr. Chairman, Colleagues, Europe is the first region in the world to feel the effect of demographic challenges.

The demographic development is the result of three factors: birth rate, life expectancy, and migration flows. Birth rates have declined in the European Union for the last three decades and no reversal of the trend is observed. In some Member States it is going downward, while in my country, Bulgaria, it can be called "demographic collapse" with the lowest birth rate and the highest mortality rate in Europe.

At the same time, life expectancy is on the growth. This is a stable trend that will have its impact on all aspects of the economic and social development of European citizens in future.

Let us take, for example, the old-age dependence ratio. Currently, it is 1 to 4, as it has been pointed out here. It is expected to become 1 to 2 by 2050. But even today, this delicate ratio is already a fact. Once again I am going to quote the example of Bulgaria, where the ratio between pensioners and people at work is already 1 to 1.2.

As to migration flows, our approach should focus on their effective management rather than their excessive control. What we need is a more flexible policy of the Community and the Member States to immigrants, especially those coming from third countries. Immigration could be a positive element but it is not the panacea to resolve any aspect of the existing demographic problems.

All these examples come to show that demographic challenges are a fact and we have to face them now. We have to change the perspective from challenges to opportunities. There seems to be too much talk and too little action with regard to demographic changes. Therefore I firmly support the understanding that the demographic development should be a horizontal policy issue to be mainstreamed in the various policies of the Community, and of the national, regional and local authorities.

**Gabriela Crețu (PSE).** – (RO) We have here a very good report, which seems to have said everything. We thank those who worked on it. Nevertheless, allow me a reformulation that is not a figure of speech. Our general goal, as politicians, is to arrange relationships between people in the society, so that we can all live as long as possible keeping harmony between us and nature. If we accept this goal, we have no demographic problem.

In fact, we are subject to a demographic study only by an unjustified simplification and ignorance of what we are. There are other indicators measuring the situation of people, as population, and we know them. They are called human development indexes. From this point of view, the European Union countries are ranked at the top of the most advanced countries, which is good. The challenge is not to change the demographic behaviours, but to accept that we need to change our economic and social model. It is superior to other models, but inadequate. It lagged behind our own development as people. There is a gap between our general goal and the organization of the social environment and the economic relations, between declaration and facts.

We say it is necessary to have more children born. In the meantime, 30% of Europe's children live below the poverty threshold. We ask women to give birth to children, but single mothers experience the biggest risk of exclusion. The employment rate has to increase, but social services should not be financed. We export problems and we want to import solutions, but citizens are not a market. We have to humanize the economic and social relations if we want to solve this problem. This is the big challenge.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

*Vice-President*

**Péter Olajos (PPE-DE).** – (HU) Mr President, I am addressing you now on behalf of a region in demographic crisis and one of the sickest nations in that region. As a Member responsible for public health, I cannot emphasise strongly enough how closely our demographic problems are linked to public health problems. In my homeland, Hungary, more people die from cancer than anywhere else in Europe, and this too is contributing to the fact that each year 50% more people die than are born.

The Castex report on the demographic future of Europe rightly points out that a new policy must be drawn up in the interests of renewal. Allow me to give just one example: whilst the population of Islamic countries will grow to 1 300 million by 2050, Europe will fall from 495 to 400 million.

This new demographic policy must be built on two bases: the family, as the most important basic unit of society, and healthy people. Families must be guaranteed a system that encourages them effectively, and protection. Today, in many Member States, having children is equal to having poverty. But there are many good examples too. There are some countries where the state takes the additional burden from the shoulders of large families. This good example must be implemented everywhere.

Health is a condition for quality of life. Citizens must be made interested in preserving their own state of health. They will obtain the state support necessary for this in every material area, such as compulsory screening tests and free sports opportunities, and all along intellectual lines, that is, with education in health and demographic knowledge.

It is in the fundamental interests of every Member State to improve its demographic and health situation. This is particularly important in Hungary, where the population might fall below 10 million in future, and where the average life expectancy is ten years lower than the European average. The future of Europe depends on the demographic performance of the generations living now. What a government fails to do today with a bad policy will be difficult to rectify later.

**Vladimír Maňka (PSE).** – (SK) Ladies and gentlemen, people in the European Union are living longer and longer. That is a positive phenomenon. On the other hand, there is a steady decrease in the number of young people. The number of people in the productive age group will start to fall within no more than three or four years. Today the ratio is three people of working age to one person of pension age; it will be just one and a half people of working age in 2050. How do we solve the economic effects of the ageing of the population?

Firstly: we must find jobs for more people. The traditional policy of men working and women carrying out family duties is not creditable any more. Most women wish both to become mothers and to have a professional career. Public policies must back both wishes. The Scandinavian countries are a good example. Their active labour market policies combined with better care for women with children offer the best quality of life.

Secondly, we must reform the social welfare systems designed to care for older people and for people who have reached pension age. If we do not do this on the grounds of social equality and solidarity, the losers will be mostly older people. In order to achieve a long-term improvement, we need reforms of pension systems and medical care systems, and investment in good health. Older people have accumulated a lot of knowledge and experience and we need to motivate them to continue to work for longer in their lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Lisbon Strategy is beginning a new cycle, giving us an opportunity to introduce reforms that will increase productivity at work and help to create jobs, thus helping to reduce the economic impact of population ageing.

**Roberta Alma Anastase (PPE-DE).** – (RO) Ladies and gentlemen, at present, Europe is dealing with substantial demographic challenges that will have a long-term impact on its future. Therefore, today's debate is not only welcomed, but also necessary for ensuring a good future and sustainable development.

Of all the report's recommendations, I consider that 3 ideas should constitute the core of the European demographic policy. In the context of the population aging trend, the European Union should first of all pay particular attention to children and young people. Child protection and providing a solid opportunity for personal and professional evolution for young people are strategically important for the future, and the development of these objectives should be integrated into a comprehensive policy of family protection and women's promotion.

The second element, education, is in close correlation with the above-mentioned principle. A competitive Europe involves human resources able to face the new challenges, as well as scientific progress, public health and an adequate living standard. The achievement of these objectives unquestionably depends on the level of education and lifelong training of all the generations.

Finally, migration inflows represent the third decisive factor since immigration is an important premise for ensuring demographic equilibrium and economic growth. Therefore, I welcome the Rapporteur's call to consider immigration a positive element of the European population, but, especially, to consolidate the European policies in the field of social integration of immigrants, and the fight against discrimination and xenophobia.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to mobilize public policies at all the necessary levels in order to successfully implement the mentioned objectives. Local and regional authorities have a decisive role in this direction and they should be constantly involved.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE).** – (LT) Congratulations to the rapporteur on having prepared such an excellent document. I would like to point out that both our success and our failure in implementing it will be of huge importance for the future of the European Union. There is a possibility that several smaller EU nations could find themselves on the brink of extinction in 100 years' time. The aging population reflects an increase in quality of life and social solidarity as well as the devaluation of the family. It could hinder the progress of Europe but, with the relevant precautions in place, new possibilities may arise.

The countries that joined the EU in the new millennium in particular are feeling the burden of these problems very acutely. Their citizens are plagued by pitiful pensions, birth rates lower than the EU average, alcohol and drug abuse... This area benefited from a sufficient number of crèches and infant schools before the transition to the market economy, when most of them were closed down. There is mass emigration from the new accession countries, especially the Baltic countries, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, to the richer Member States. This represents an immense loss of hard-working hands and educated minds, people who were educated in their countries at great cost.

I support the proposal to allocate structural funds to compensate for this damage, but it is not enough. There should be additional financial support for new accession countries, which are most unfortunately suffering from 'brain drain', as they have lost their best scientists, doctors, engineers and artists to the richer Member States. I support the proposal to enable older people to work part-time, as they would then be able to pass on their experience to the younger generation.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, can I suggest that this is a very depressing debate, although it is based on a very factual and thorough report, for which I congratulate the rapporteur. Maybe it is on too late at night because one could get nightmares based on the demographic trends that are contained in it.

Certainly if we do nothing, the forebodings contained in the report may yet come to pass, although some Member States are reacting and putting in place measures to support men, women and children and that is positive.

Ironically, I grew up in an era where they told us we had too many children, and being one of a family of eight was probably large in the European context, although I am happy to say that my mother, at 85, is still alive and well.

The simple truth is that women cannot do it all. We cannot have children, hold onto a job outside the home, mind elderly parents and participate in wider society. Something has to give. I think the problem is that the birth rate is the issue that has given, if you like, in all of this. But, ironically, I have great faith in humanity, realising the reality of where we are at and adjusting to a more balanced look at what is needed for a vibrant society and again placing a greater value on children. Perhaps this debate tonight will add to that.

**Marusya Ivanova Lyubcheva (PSE).** – (BG) Mr. Chairman, Mr. Commissioner, The most important feature of this report is its link to realities in life. Demographic problems do exist in Europe and in some countries they acquire the dimensions of a crisis. They have their root causes and national specificities but they also share some elements in common.

The consequences ahead of us are very important indeed: the inability to resolve major social and economic issues of Member States with our own human resources, which will evolve in the near future; the deeply changing structure of migration flows which, in its turn, generates new challenges. A policy oriented to young generations, maternity, social protection and economic support to young women and men and their families, and responsible parenthood are essential for overcoming demographic problems. Maternity should be recognised for the purposes of calculating the length of service.

Demographic problems should also be incorporated in the education and training of each generation to come. Otherwise, the problem will be postponed from one generation to another and mount to bring about new crises. Let us not forget the sexual education, the education in good parenthood, and the solidarity between generations. Governments should be more committed to the raising and education of children and their accommodation at crèches and kindergartens.

**Avril Doyle (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur for an excellent report.

Improving life expectancy in a static or declining working-age population will imply an increasing dependency across Europe, with serious implications for our competitiveness with other economic regions, for pensions, health and indeed long-term care expenditure.

Interestingly, the age structure of the Irish population is different to most other countries in the EU, and in fact our demographic situation is quite favourable over the medium term.

Our peak population age group is now about 10 to 15 years younger than in the EU-25 in general. But by 2050 our population structure will be quite similar to the rest of Europe, with the old-age dependency ratio projected to rise to 45% in 2050, compared to an EU average at that point of 53%.

Interestingly, in 1845 the Irish population was over 8 million. Twenty years ago it was 3.5 million. Today it is 4.25 million. Our relatively high fertility levels have been augmented by increasing immigration and the return of economic exiles in recent years. If that is maintained it will help to support the balance between the generations.

**Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, in rising to speak in this debate, I wish to draw attention to the following problems: among the important causes of a low birth rate in Europe we have, firstly, difficulties in reconciling family life with working life, i.e. the inadequate number of places at nurseries for small children and the lack of socio-economic support for families and for women's employment.

Secondly we have uncertainty arising from the material and employment situation that young people face, with a lack of employment continuity, late access for young people to employment, and finally expensive housing, which is consequently inaccessible to young people. What is needed is support for families through the tax system, chiefly the structure of income tax on natural persons and VAT; in the former instance the best solution is the kind adopted in France, for example a family quotient enabling the tax burden for families bringing up children to be markedly reduced. In the latter instance, what is needed is preferential tax rates for children's goods.

Thirdly we must maintain application of the principle of intergenerational solidarity in social security, in other words the principle that the working population bears the costs of benefits, pensions and health care for those who are not working – that is, children, young people, people who cannot manage on their own and, lastly, old people.

**Gerard Batten (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, inside the European Union, Britain has lost control of its borders. Immigration to Britain is now uncontrolled, unlimited and indiscriminate. As far as anyone knows, immigration to Britain is currently running at about half a million people per year. Taking into account those who leave, the net increase in population is about 200 000 per year, or a million people every five years.

The birth rates of the immigrant population are much higher than that of the indigenous population. The dramatic rise in population in England, in particular, is fuelled purely by totally unnecessary immigration. Demographers have calculated that, on current trends, within two generations, the native British, and especially the English, will be an ethnic minority in their own land. Britain simply cannot control its immigration policy inside the European Union, and that is yet another good reason why we should leave.

**Vladimír Špidla, Member of the Commission.** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, let me emphasise once more the high quality of Mrs Castex's report, as it clearly provided the platform for a wide-ranging debate, which touched on almost all the fundamental issues.

It would be very difficult to try to respond to all the issues raised, so allow me just to state briefly that the European Commission's fundamental principle, which is reflected in all our documents, is based on equal opportunities; in none of our documents would you find the idea that demographic development is a problem for one gender only. It is quite clear that it is an issue of equal opportunities and equal rights for men and women. It is also evident that one of the answers to this problem is creating an active society, which means a society with the highest possible level of social inclusion, a society that can offer opportunities of active employment to as many individual members as possible.

Let me also say that as a result of earlier debates a more stable and constant platform has been established, including the demography forum and the Alliance for Families. I would also like to point out that the Commission has been working with the social partners on assessing the possibilities of legislative initiatives in the area of work/life balance. The Commission is focusing, too, on immigration with a view to the gradual development of a more cohesive European policy, including, for example, the Blue Card proposal.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to say that, regardless of the fact that – as in all debates – this debate has encompassed some extreme opinions, we are starting to see a general consensus and, in my view, this consensus sits very well with the basic recommendations that the Commission presented at the beginning of this demographic debate.

As I have said, a stable platform has been established and I therefore expect this debate to continue, because I believe, as almost all of you do, that Europe's demographic development is one of the basic components that will determine our future both in the medium and long term.

**Françoise Castex, rapporteur.** – (FR) Mr President, I will be brief because many things have been said.

I would like to thank Mr Špidla for having pointed out that the issue of demographics is not an issue about women only, and that it concerns women, men and couples. I would like to point out, for my fellow Members who made the criticism that men had been forgotten, that I devoted a paragraph in my report to the issue of promoting paternity law and developing the involvement of fathers in family life.

Anyway, to try to round up a bit what was said and sum up the main thrust of the report, I would like to highlight the strong demand that exists for effective public policies. These are policies, in the plural, concerning support, care and education, which might seem slightly paradoxical for an issue that in fact relates to the intimacy of couples and the family. However, I believe that an appeal is being made to the public authorities at European level, and in the Member States, that needs to be heard and must be taken on board.

I would also like to underline this issue of strong demand for solidarity, not only solidarity between the generations, which we have dealt with several times in this House, but solidarity between different regions. Mrs Schroedter and Mr Beaupuy highlighted and recalled this evening how important it is to take account of the regional imbalances the demographic issue will cause between ageing regions that demand more care and therefore more expenditure, and younger regions that will be creating wealth, because that is where the productive population will be. This is something the European Commission has to take into account in managing the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds.

Finally, the issue of the job market, as Mr Andersson, Chairman of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, mentioned, is an important issue in the demographic question. It is not peripheral, because it will be necessary to do more with a smaller, shrunken active population. From this point of view, the calls for better management of human resources, for investment in lifelong education and training are extremely important, and they must be heeded not only by the public authorities in these particular cases, but by all the social partners, particularly companies, because they have a major responsibility in this area.

This debate is therefore not yet over.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12 noon.

#### **Written statements (Rule 142)**

**Zita Gurmai (PSE), in writing.** – (HU) The ageing of the population brings with it some significant economic, financial and social challenges. It will have a serious impact on growth and will place significant pressure on social benefits, so it is crucial to prepare for it.

Dealing with the demographic problems is thus a multi-faceted challenge that requires complex, strategic analysis, planning and social dialogue. It is not only about the gradual fall in the population, but also about the sustainability of the European social model for the welfare of European citizens, ensuring European economic development and global competitiveness at international level, that is to say, it is about the future of Europe, our future, and so looking for the solution is a common interest.

The Member States of the European Union must use all the instruments possible to support demographic renewal, which must be based on the sustainability of closer solidarity between the generations than previously, on ensuring the implementation of equal opportunities in practice, on reconciling professional and private life, on fully implementing the Barcelona objectives, on creating the conditions for active old age and on specific measures to promote the social inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The results we want can only be achieved by common goals, common interests, common collaboration and compulsion to achieve the goals.

**Monica Maria Iacob-Ridzi (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (RO) The demographic strategy of the European Union refers to many aspects of a social and economic nature. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize the importance of a coherent youth policy, especially as regards access to the labour market.

It is a known fact that, at present, the 25-to-30 age segment is in a relatively small percentage on the European labour market as compared to other population categories. The European Commission and the Member States should increase the number of legislative initiatives and pilot-programmes in order to facilitate the employment of young people. Examples of such initiatives could be: providing tax incentives for the companies employing young people or extending the range of flexible labour contracts.

Secondly, especially in the new Member States, we are dealing with the problem of the regions collectively left by young people. By the structural funds it makes available for the Member States, the European Union's cohesion policy should create favourable conditions for young people so that they can develop their professional and business projects in the communities they come from. Member States should supplement the European Union's financial support by actions such as: priority access of young people to land and dwellings, tax incentives for the enterprising young people or access to subsidized loans for young people's projects.

**Marianne Mikko (PSE), in writing.** – Europe is not ready for the challenges posed by our demography.

For 60 years, Europe has put its trust in a pyramid scheme. It works as long as every generation is much larger than the previous one. But, today, European families are raising fewer children than their parents.

I would like to point out that in the 21st century the low birth rates present less of an economical danger than they did 60 years ago. Progress of technology lets us produce much more goods with much less labour. Globalisation means that the countries with young and growing populations will help us to carry the pension burden, if our policies allow it. My country, Estonia, is a great example of a successful transition to a funded pension scheme.

At the same time, Estonia feels that low birth rates endanger the sustainability of our culture, maybe even nationhood. This is the problem of many smaller nations.

If we want to preserve Europe as we know it, we must protect our cultures also by protecting our families. We, the policymakers, must to make sure that technology and globalisation are our servants, not masters. This report is a good start.

**Bogusław Rogalski (UEN), in writing.** – (PL) Mr President, according to demographic predictions, in 2050 the average age in Europe will have risen from 39 (as it was in 2004) to 49, which will have an impact on the population structure and the age pyramid.

This will cause, among other things, a fall in the number of young people, a diminution in the working-age population and a rise in the average life span. These changes are giving rise to an increase in the cost borne by society in connection with maintenance of the occupationally passive population. They will also enhance regional differences, which are characterised by an outflow of young people, thus enhancing society's ageing process, or a positive migration balance which retards this process.

Immigration, however, is only a short-term and partial solution, so Member States should take steps towards respect for gender equality, social and financial support for families and protection of motherhood. Only societies for whom children are a policy priority and who promote a pro-family environment will be in a position to contend with unfavourable demographic changes.

I want to emphasise that an increase in the average life span is something positive, so preventive measures must be taken to combat poverty among pensioners and to enable them to live out their last years with dignity. Member States should petition for the creation of affordable care structures for people who cannot manage on their own and for children. Member States should also draw attention to the problem of infertility, as it has an enormous impact on a process that is amplifying the growth of demographic imbalance, and to cooperation in overcoming difficulties.

### **13. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes**

## 14. Scientific cooperation with Africa (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Commission statement on scientific cooperation with Africa.

**Vladimír Špidla**, *Member of the Commission.* – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, as we all know, the global economy is increasingly shaped by technological innovation.

Developing countries should use technology for introducing innovation, which would improve the living conditions of their poor and increase the competitiveness of their countries and their businesses. It is true that most developing countries have opened up their economies, but they remain trapped in the production of commodities with low added value and plagued by the lack of a skilled workforce. Developing countries must, therefore, increase their production capacities and diversify their economies through better application of innovation and new technologies in agriculture, production and services.

At present, African scientists do not participate sufficiently in international research and development projects, including those that receive the financial backing of the European Union. This is due in part to the lack of expertise in building the necessary research capacity, networks and partnerships and to shortcomings in dealing with intellectual property rights, contracts, technology transfer and the dissemination of research results.

It must be stressed, however, that global problems such as infectious diseases and biodiversity can only be solved successfully with the participation of these countries.

African politicians are aware of this and are doing their best to make science and technology a priority. The African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology held in September 2005 adopted a new Consolidated Plan of Action for NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development. In addition, last year, in January 2007, the Commission of the African Union appealed to Africa at the African Union summit to take the initiative to build large science and technology capacities with a view to training large numbers of scientists, engineers and technicians. The year 2008 was then declared the Year of Science in Africa.

The European Commission recognises the importance of this issue and places an increasing degree of emphasis on science and technology as an important part of development cooperation negotiations. African scientists can participate in the Commission's general research program or the Marie Curie Actions, which provide grants to scientists from third countries, including developing countries.

Under the 9th European Development Fund EUR 35.5 million was allocated to a programme for scientific and technological capacity-building as part of cooperation with the ACP countries. We are also currently involved in negotiations with our partners regarding further support under the 10th European Development Fund.

Towards the end of last year the European Union and the African Union agreed an EU-Africa Partnership on Science, Information and Space. This Partnership will help to bridge the gap between us in the area of science, develop Africa's scientific and technological capacity and help Africa to make better use of science and technology to reduce poverty and promote economic growth and social development. It will also contribute under the Consolidated Plan of Action for Africa in the sphere of science and technology.

In addition, the Partnership will ensure that the burden is shared equally among the individual Member States. In this connection, some Member States have assumed a leadership role in specialised areas, for example Holland for horticulture or Sweden for water supply and distribution research.

**Pilar del Castillo Vera**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, we are reflecting here today – since we are not going to have a debate because we are not in a fit state for a big debate right now – about the joint motion for a resolution tabled by the parliamentary groups to support measures to improve the development of science in Africa and to enable a stronger, more fluid relationship with the EU than there has been so far in the field of science and applied technology.

As the Commissioner said, the summit that took place in Lisbon, the second EU-Africa summit – we should recall that the first was in 2000 in Cairo – once again highlighted the importance of this dimension, this area of science and technology in the future development of Africa.

In 2010 there is going to be an evaluation of the implementation of the decisions that were made in these agreements, in this summit in Lisbon between Africa and the European Union. We are now going to adopt a resolution that aims to influence this from the European Parliament; which therefore follows in the wake



of the Lisbon summit, but not only of this summit, but in some way of various initiatives which, in many places in the world, are being implemented at the moment in relation to Africa.

Now that China, as a large country and a large geographical, political, cultural and economic area, is starting to develop considerably, as is the case with India and many Asian countries, more than ever the focus has turned back towards Africa. What is more, it has turned back in a new way, taking a qualitative step forward in relation to the past. The focus has shifted back not out of charity, which has largely characterised the relationship between the West and Africa, but out of proximity, equality, association, etc.

In this respect, especially in the field of science and technology, there is still a long way to go, because work has been done in other fields such as health, education, etc., but there has not been a great deal of work done in the field of science and technology. However, the benefits that it could bring for the development of Africa and for fully including Africa in globalisation, which to a certain extent it is excluded from – I say that in inverted commas – are going to be incredibly important.

I therefore think that the resolution that Parliament will vote on tomorrow is a boost, an incentive in that direction, which I think is fundamental for Africa and for the future of the world.

**Teresa Riera Madurell**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, this is an important motion for a resolution, because we have often talked about Africa here, but rarely about scientific cooperation with the continent. Nowadays the economic and social development of peoples is inseparable from scientific research, technological development and innovation.

Moreover, in a globalised world, many of the problems that science is still trying to solve require the cooperation of all without exception, especially in specific sectors such as energy, climate change or food safety.

Scientific cooperation for development should therefore be a priority in our overall cooperation strategy with African countries.

This requires increasing the participation of scientists in joint R&D projects, promoting exchanges and the mobility of research personnel, strengthening research infrastructures in accordance with the needs of the scientific community and, above all, supporting what already exists.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have just come back from South Africa where I went in my capacity as a member of the EP delegation. With the Republic of South Africa, for example, there has been an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation for ten years. That was the reason for Commissioner Potočnik's visit to the country in November.

This cooperation agreement is producing significant results that are mutually beneficial: South African scientists have taken part in 117 research projects in the Sixth Framework Programme, a level of participation which is below only that of the United States, China and the Russian Federation, and even greater participation is planned in the Seventh Framework Programme.

This cooperation is in such diverse areas as biotechnology, health, nanotechnologies, aeronautics, transport, energy and climate change. It is cooperation that as Europeans we should support because we have many problems in common that need an urgent solution and because joining forces in research and development, innovation and technology transfer cannot but be beneficial to both parties.

One example is energy, which is also a red-hot issue there. We are seeking the same thing: ensuring supply at a reasonable price and in an environmentally friendly way. Along these lines very interesting research projects are being conducted on carbon technologies, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Another important area of scientific cooperation with South Africa and the whole of Africa in general that should be highlighted is that on AIDS, a disease that is ravaging the continent and which, in a country like South Africa, has reduced life expectancy by more than 10 years.

I therefore think that the particular reference in the resolution to research into this disease is very important.

Finally, I would like to point out that all cooperation needs to be enhanced, through an exchange of information, frank and open dialogue and sincere recognition by both parties.

**Fiona Hall**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, this motion for a resolution on supporting scientific cooperation with Africa is very timely, because it comes hot on the heels of a series of statements on science

in Africa over the last 12 months – by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in January 2007, in the G8 Summit Declaration about strengthening research and development cooperation and in the new chapter on ICT and science and technology in the EU-Africa Strategy.

With the Science with Africa conference in Addis Ababa coming up in March, this is indeed the moment for the European Parliament to register its support for a new and intensified approach to EU-Africa scientific cooperation. Of course, there have been initiatives in the past. There have been scholarships and research fellowships to help African scientists come and work in Europe. There has been support for certain projects. But what there has not been is fully developed two-way scientific cooperation between Africa and the EU.

There is not yet a solid research base within Africa for Africa. The statistics say it all. Africa has only 1% of the world's scientific researchers, but 13% of the world's population. Only 1 in 10 000 people in Africa is a scientist or engineer, whereas the figure is 1 in 200 in industrial nations.

Yet, because of climate change, there is no part of the planet where research is more vital. Global warming in Africa threatens to wipe out the modest progress that has been made towards the Millennium Development Goals. But, if only the science and technology base was stronger, climate change could also be an opportunity for Africa.

This motion for a resolution rightly makes specific mention of solar energy. It is the renewable energy which Africa has in abundance. Huge advances are being made today in photovoltaic technology. Last Friday, I was at the New and Renewable Energy Centre in Blyth in Northumberland, where innovative research is going on to reduce the cost of solar electricity by focusing the sun's rays on very small silicon cells.

I am delighted that this research is happening in my constituency, but unless such research and development happens in Africa too, the immense potential of photovoltaics to deliver megawatts of electricity across Africa will never be realised. I hope that this is the sort of scientific cooperation we are now moving towards.

**Jens Holm**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (SV) Good evening. One of the key issues when we discuss scientific cooperation with Africa is how the African countries will be able to protect themselves against climate change. As the UN Climate Panel has found, Africa is perhaps the continent in the world that may be hit hardest by climate change. This is actually already happening here and now. Crops are being burnt. The desert is spreading. Lakes and streams are drying up, and climate refugees on the African continent can now be numbered in their millions.

Many of the conflicts that exist in Africa at present are a result of the pressure and tension produced by climate change. One of the greatest ironies of the climate problem is that it is those who pollute the least that are most affected.

Ethiopia, to take one example, emits 0.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide per inhabitant per year, whilst my own country, Sweden, emits more than 6 tonnes per person per year. The EU average is around 10 tonnes. Sweden therefore emits 60 times more, and the EU 100 times more, than Ethiopia, to take just one specific example.

Seen from this perspective, we in Europe obviously have a huge responsibility. On the one hand we must reduce our own emissions massively, whilst on the other we must do everything we can to help the developing countries to take action against climate change.

This evening we are debating how we can establish effective scientific cooperation with Africa. I think that we must ask ourselves, self-critically, here and now: are we really doing all we can to support African countries? Are we really doing all we can, for example, to transfer modern, environmentally-friendly technology and knowledge to African countries? When we negotiate trade agreements, do we pay most attention to our own businesses or do we pay most attention to African businesses that want to trade with us on fair terms? Unfortunately, I for one cannot give a positive answer to these questions. So there is much to be done.

What is the situation, for example, with our laws on intellectual property and patents? In November in our resolution prior to the Bali negotiations we in the European Parliament stated that 'the European Parliament recognises that Intellectual Property Rights licensing fees in the area of clean technologies may constitute a barrier to the transfer of such technology to developing countries'.

Let me take an example: 75% of wind power technology is controlled by four companies in the world. Yes, just four companies in the whole world. Three of those companies are European. The fourth is from the United States. When many developing countries now want to develop wind power they must use old and unpatented technology. They simply cannot afford modern, environmentally-friendly technology.

Much of the modern technology is simply deadlocked by our own legislation. Of course this supports a minority of large enterprises that control the patents. But what benefit is this for Angola, Botswana or Rwanda?

I want a clear answer from the Commission this evening. Are you doing anything to make the laws on intellectual property and patents more flexible? What are you doing so that technology can be transferred more easily?

Lastly, another example of these shortcomings is the so-called flexible mechanisms. Of course we in industrialised countries can transfer some of our climate responsibility to developing countries. The aim is, if it is interpreted lawfully, that we must transfer technology and environmental activity to developing countries. However, according to a new report which we received in the Committee on the Environment last year, less than 2% of CDM projects are in African countries. The majority represent projects which in fact are of no particularly great benefit.

What is the Commission's view on the flexible mechanisms and CDM projects, the Clean Development Mechanism? Are you prepared to revise those mechanisms thoroughly as we in the European Parliament have demanded? How will Africa be able to take greater benefit from technology transfers in future?

**Avril Doyle (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, science and technology have been identified by the African Union as crucial contributors to sustainable development on the African continent.

Currently nearly all African countries are lagging behind with regard to scientific output and scientific capacity. Take scientific publications as one indicator. Egypt, as one of the strongest African countries in this area, accounts for a mere 0.4% share of global publications. Scientific collaboration and cooperation offers the chance to overcome the extreme disparities in development. However, it faces considerable challenges in areas such as global sustainability problems like poverty, climate change, biodiversity, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, energy, clean water – the list is seemingly endless. Add to that the brain drain, the problem of free circulation of scientists and limited access to information.

Currently there are more opportunities than ever to collaborate successfully with African partners. Examples of these are in the areas of biotechnology, ICT, space and nanotechnologies.

Coupled with Africa's rich natural resources and biodiversity, these could prove highly effective. In addition a renewed political commitment in Africa and a greater commitment of industrialised countries including China are essential for any further development in this area.

Over the past 20 years the EU has gathered considerable experience regarding the organisation and management of collaborative S&T programmes. FP7 offers some very interesting opportunities to partners from Africa but more can be done.

We have to realise the full potential that cooperation on matters of science has to offer African countries and the development of the African continent. The fields of science and technology can and must do more. We must create broad channels of communication and networks between scientists and development practitioners to learn from each other.

The concept of science diplomacy is back at the top of the agenda and must be adapted for a new era of the internet, of low-cost travel, 24-hour global news, the power of NGOs – a long list.

The fact that science is and must remain outside the realm of politics makes scientists trusted diplomats. It is time for the scientific community to increase its role in diplomacy. A vigorous new science diplomacy oriented to African citizens as well as to their governments will provide human well-being, education, economic growth and above all hope. A diplomacy of deeds and not just words. The Millennium Development Goals look increasingly challenging in this year of science with Africa.

**Romana Jordan Cizelj (PPE-DE).** – (SL) Africa has more than 13% of the total world population, but only 1% of the world's scientists. It spends only 0.3% of its GNP on research and development. At the same time, Europe is faced with two major global challenges which can only be successfully met by global action. This also applies to scientific research.

The first challenge consists of the so-called millennium development goals to eradicate world poverty. The poor health or death of adults at an age when they could still be active may push younger and older generations of their family into poverty. When using the facilities of the Seventh Framework Programme, we must be

sufficiently transparent not to invest resources only for research into diseases which afflict the European population. We must also find an appropriate solution to diseases that present a global threat, such as AIDS, which took more than 2 million lives in 2006.

The other challenge is climate change. The data indicate that it mostly affects the poor. Europe must accept its share of responsibility and cooperate in measures to adapt to climate change, as well as in measures to limit global warming.

The Seventh Framework Programme could also include scientists from developing countries. However, the message coming from them is that their facilities for this cooperation are too meagre. The mechanisms within development policy frameworks offer great potential for reducing the differences. However, we must bring to an end the traditional cooperation based solely on aid. Forming a partnership means that we have to include science, technology and innovation in our development policies.

**Jerzy Buzek (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Thank you, Mr President. Thank you, Commissioner. We are living in an age of globalisation, which means acute competition by everyone with everyone. The African continent is a field of particular rivalry. The Chinese and Japanese economies, Australia and the United States are all trying to acquire this market.

If one wishes to encourage and strengthen relations, one usually begins with sport, and that has already happened. Immediately after that, though, come student exchanges and scientific cooperation. If we are to start working with Africa in that area today, then in five or maybe 10 years' time we shall be exchanging thousands of students and scientists. These will constitute thousands of ambassadors for our mutual cooperation. Today's joint scientific undertakings will in 10 years' time equate to major investments, a flow of skilled workers, the opening up of markets, and consequently competition, growth and new jobs in Europe and Africa. It is worth making the effort today to enable this to come about.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, scientific cooperation with Africa has to be with the objective of developing a trained and active scientific community on that continent for the benefit of that continent, not, I should warn, to steal their scientists, as we do their trained medical and nursing personnel.

I was very heartened in 2005, when in Malawi, to meet a young trained agricultural scientist. He had been to the European Union and had trained there, but was proud to be back amongst his own people, showing them how to use the soil and water to produce food to give them a sustainable life.

I would just finish by saying that one of the areas that have been neglected in Africa is investment in agricultural science, and the World Bank's draft report for this year is testament to that. So I think we should collaborate at all levels in science, but we should look particularly at the area of agriculture and natural resources.

**Avril Doyle (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I might be testing your patience, but I noticed a precedent earlier in the day for speakers taking the floor again if there were not five 'catch-the-eyes', so thank you.

I would like to put a specific question to the Commissioner. I spoke of diplomacy and science diplomacy – a diplomacy of deeds and not just words. There is a general view that the Lisbon Summit on the EU and Africa last year was a major disappointment, and that there were more words than deeds. I would like you specifically to respond to that allegation.

Could you indicate any of the deeds, as distinct from words, that will emanate from the hundreds – if not thousands – of people that gathered in Lisbon to talk about this most important issue, and when we might see something flowing from it?

**Vladimír Špidla, Member of the Commission.** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, EU policy on Africa is based on a complex strategy, and part of this strategy of course relates to Africa's access to science and technology. The European Union recognises the importance of that access, as it will enable the continent of Africa to cope with the challenges of climate change. The Commission believes that African countries must urgently develop the necessary complex strategies for adaptation, while making sure that such changes do not jeopardise the positive results these countries have achieved in their fight against poverty.

The Commission feels that our cooperation in the field of science and technology is especially important as regards research into agriculture and the monitoring of agricultural products. The Commission therefore supports the efforts of the African Union to establish a complex programme of scientific research in the area of agriculture and the endeavour of international organisations to harmonise agricultural early warning systems. We also support the transfer of renewable energy technology, which is an issue closely related to

the reduction of CO2 emissions. However, this transfer should focus more on efforts to attain a sustainable and efficient energy supply and on access to the supply, rather than the issue of climate change.

A very important role in the context of technology transfer is played by the private sector, which the Commission supports through a specific programme. As regards the Addis Ababa conference taking place in March, the Commission will take part and we hope that it will be a milestone on the road to scientific cooperation with Africa and in the development of science and technology on the African continent.

The issue of AIDS was also mentioned in the debate. Just allow me to state briefly that the European Commission is one of the largest contributors to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and I believe that we have every right to be proud of that.

As I have already mentioned, during the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon at the end of last year the African Union and the European Union also agreed a partnership between Europe and Africa in the area of information society, science and space technology. We are currently preparing a communication, which will lay down specific points and an action plan to put this partnership into practice.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid I cannot agree with the honourable Member's opinion that the Lisbon conference was a disappointment. That certainly was not the case: the conference was the first step on a journey and, as I said before, we are now taking further concrete steps, which will build on the Lisbon impetus.

**President.** – To conclude the debate, I have received one motion for a resolution<sup>(2)</sup> pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12 noon.

**Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing.** – The comment 'if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, while if you teach him to fish you feed him for life' is all too apposite to this debate. If Africa is to escape from its poverty trap, it will need to expand the exploitation of its raw materials, strengthen its manufacturing base and increase its exports, but at the same time it will need to improve its scientific expertise. We in the West must increase the involvement of African scientists in international collaborative science and R&D projects, and reinforce existing research infrastructure.

## **15. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes**

## **16. Closure of the sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 11.30 p.m.)*

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<sup>(2)</sup> See Minutes.