

THURSDAY, 5 JUNE 2008

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ROTHE

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

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

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Monica Frassoni (Verts/ALE). – *(IT)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, the ECURIE System – the European Community security system – was triggered yesterday following an undefined incident in a Slovenian nuclear power station. The alert was subsequently called off, but doubts persist as to the true nature of the incident and the reasons for this highly unusual alert. We therefore wish to make the most of the fact that the Commission will be present later on today, and that Slovenia holds the presidency, to call upon the presidency and the Commission to inform the European Parliament, and hence the public, of the real reasons why this utterly abnormal procedure occurred. I should be grateful, Madam President, if you would act on this request.

President. – I think that the Slovenian Presidency, which will be here today, will come back to this request.

2. The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Member of the Commission. – *(FR)* Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I think I should speak French today, so that is what I will do.

I would like to begin by thanking the European Parliament for having included this item on our relations with our Mediterranean partners in this sitting's agenda. That has given rise to a debate on a subject that is vitally important for Europe and I would especially like to congratulate the European Parliament on its role in recent years because its interest in the Mediterranean has never waned. The Barcelona Process has enabled us to tackle numerous regional issues of strategic importance and, naturally, a number of political issues. I believe that we have achieved a great deal, although many common challenges remain, including security, environmental protection, ensuring sustainable energy supply, combating organised crime, controlling migratory flows and intercultural dialogue. In addition to this cooperation with our Mediterranean neighbours, I would like us to strengthen our understanding of one another and our interests, respect as well as mutual trust.

In March the European Council invited the Commission to redefine the modalities of the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' and on 20 May the Commission adopted a communication underlining the central role of the Mediterranean, its historical and contemporary importance, and the considerable challenges of our common future. However, I should point out that we still have the European Neighbourhood Policy of course, which is a bilateral policy while the other is a regional policy. We also need to take account of the fact that the existing action plans effectively implement the decisions taken by the various sectoral ministerial meetings. When we think about the Mediterranean, we think about the cradle of the three monotheistic religions, the melting pots of civilisation and culture, migration and trade. We think about the history of the Mediterranean, a history that is inseparable from the history of Europe. The Mediterranean Basin is effectively the bridge between the North and the South, the East and the West, and, situated at the point where three continents converge, it is more than just a border for the European Union. Stability in that region is crucial for our security and our prosperity, not to mention the security and prosperity of our Mediterranean neighbours and friends. It is only through determined and realistic political action, combined with a strong and tireless commitment and constructive dialogue, that we will be able to tackle these challenges together.

The Commission has always called for a stronger, more open and more constructive relationship with our Mediterranean partners, and we are putting forward concrete proposals to achieve this.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to outline for you today the main observations and proposals in the communication that I presented to the Commission. The Barcelona Process has unfortunately suffered as a result of the ongoing conflicts in the Southern Mediterranean and, at times, from the lack of cooperation between the various partners. A positive change is taking place, however, and I saw this myself during my recent visits to the region. The time has come to take advantage of a renewed political will to breathe new life into our cooperation to ensure that it is more balanced and more in tune with our fellow citizens. In our opinion, there are three key objectives.

The first is to upgrade the political level of the European Union's relationship with its Mediterranean partners; the second is to provide more co-ownership to our multilateral relations; and the third is to make these relations more concrete and more visible through additional regional and sub-regional projects, relevant for the people of the region. These measures would bring great added value. Naturally, private funds will come into play: hitherto only the Community sector has been involved, so the private sector will now play a role. We will of course have to see whether this really works, but that is the idea in any case. It is therefore essential to upgrade the level of our relations. The Commission proposes organising biennial summits of the heads of state or government. It would be difficult to understand why we hold regular summits with our major partners throughout the world without having a forum for talks between the EU heads of state and our Mediterranean neighbours and friends. In addition, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly has reaffirmed itself as the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process. It provides a framework of debate, open dialogue and free exchange of views. It gives impetus to the partnership by adopting resolutions and recommendations, and it will be the legitimate parliamentary representation of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Commission unreservedly supports the strengthening of the role of the Parliamentary Assembly in relations with the Mediterranean partners. Increased co-ownership is also essential. Over the past few years, one important shared belief was that the agenda of the Barcelona Process was influenced by the fact that the EU presidency also held the presidency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Three proposals have received the general support of the partners: the establishment of a co-presidency, with one co-president from a Southern country and one from a Northern country; the establishment of a Joint Permanent Committee, based in Brussels and responsible for governance; and the establishment of a secretariat responsible for the promotion of the projects. Finally, as Robert Schuman said, we must set up concrete projects 'which first create a *de facto* solidarity'. It is the quality of the projects that we carry out together that will guarantee the success of the initiative. That is what enables the citizens to feel the force of the links that unite both shores of the Mediterranean. The projects must add structure to the region and provide for the participation of non-State actors, civil society and businesses. Europe must act as a lever for private capital, an intermediary. The Commission is provisionally proposing the promotion of coastal motorways, the linking-up of the trans-Maghreb Motorway, solar energy and de-pollution of the Mediterranean. Of course, this list is non exhaustive and other projects will follow.

In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to emphasise one point that, in my view, is crucial. This renewed cooperation with our partners in the South must in no way detract from our solid links and policies with our neighbours to the East. On the contrary, in addition to our efforts to strengthen the individual links with our friends in the East, the Commission is enhancing regional cooperation with its 'Black Sea Synergy' initiative. We will soon publish the annual report to celebrate the first anniversary of its launch and at that stage we will be able to discuss the recent Polish and Swedish initiative. Through these efforts, in the East and in the South, we will be able to stick to our goal: enhancing our relations through flexible cooperation instruments focusing on the priorities of our partners.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Paris summit is a real opportunity to bring a new dimension to our relations with our Mediterranean partners. Although we cannot ignore the lessons of the past, we must not remain a prisoner of them. The 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' initiative is going to launch a new era in our relations with our Southern neighbours, a new partnership, based on successful elements of the Barcelona Process, with a view to moving forward together to achieve our common objectives of peace, democracy and prosperity.

Excuse me, Madam President, if I have spoken for too long, but I believe that this is a crucial subject, for me and for us all.

Vito Bonsignore, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, my Group awaited today's statement by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner with great interest. I should like to thank her again and say that the Commission's communication, adopted on 20 May, made very interesting reading.

We applaud President Sarkozy for having started the ball rolling, for having aroused the interest of the European Council and for having prompted a renewal of our Mediterranean policy, which my Group supports and hopes will prove tangible and rapid.

We know how difficult it is to pursue the ambitious goals of the Barcelona Process. On the one hand there is the unresolved Middle East conflict and tension in the Western Sahara. There is also the gap that sometimes separates us from the democratic, economic and social models of our partner countries, hampering attainment of the goals we have set ourselves. All of this is serious and makes matters difficult, but should not constitute a pretext to justify delays or changes of mind. We believe that President Sarkozy's political initiative and the backing provided by the European Commission go in the right direction, namely that of lending substance and reality to our political aspirations.

To this end the Commission has identified four projects, recalled by our Commissioner this morning, in addition to the activities already planned: motorways of the seas, depollution of the Mediterranean, environmental management, civil protection cooperation to tackle natural disasters and, lastly, a solar energy programme for the Mediterranean. Each of these projects is important, and rather than dwelling on them now we shall do so once the Commission has provided more details.

These are projects which, if carried out, will act as an incredibly important driving force, both to give the Barcelona Process a new lease of life and to complement measures already under way but not yet completed. I would recall the free trade area planned for 2010: we should like to know more about this, Commissioner, as well as about the state of play on the objectives set out in the association agreements and other ongoing projects.

To conclude, as concerns tangible projects to be completed within a reasonable time frame, I would also recall that, as well as the infrastructure of the seas and the North-South link, fresh impetus is also needed for a South-South motorway corridor connecting the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean; this system must in addition be interconnected with Europe. Lastly, there needs to be a loan scheme providing help on issues such as water and infrastructure in the Middle East.

Finally, I wish to draw the attention of the Council and the Commission to two issues. The first concerns the administration and operation of the Euro-Mediterranean Assembly. The European Union has also made major commitments in the Middle East, and we expect these commitments to be followed up with political action. Can the Council tell us what real, practical prospects there are of such action?

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I do not agree with Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner that it is appropriate to speak French this morning.

(FR) Along with my mother tongue, it is my favourite language, Commissioner, but I think that this morning in particular it is inappropriate to speak in French because President Sarkozy's mistake from the outset was to give the impression that the Union for the Mediterranean was a Franco-French idea. However, he has since become more reasonable, and that is why he must be congratulated, Mr Bonsignore.

(DE) May I also remind you that when Mr Sarkozy came to the House right at the beginning, in order to introduce the idea of the Mediterranean Union to the Conference of Presidents for the first time, I asked him: 'Can you tell me which role the Federal Republic of Germany should play in your Mediterranean Union?', and he answered: '*Le statut d'un observateur*'. We have moved on in the meantime and have clarified these issues. That is why the approach that you have described, Commissioner, is the right one.

I am firmly convinced that there are three central challenges that we have to deal with in the framework of the Mediterranean Union. First of all, I think social stability is the precondition for peace, but nowhere in the North or the South is social stability at greater risk than in the Mediterranean region. Nowhere else is the direct clash between immense wealth, on the one hand, and immense poverty, on the other, greater or more visible – indeed, tangible – than in the Mediterranean region, and nowhere are the confrontation and the ensuing tensions for us Europeans greater than in the Mediterranean.

That being the case, the Mediterranean Union is a project which could lead to more peace and stability via the economic integration of our two regions, so it is an extremely good idea, and it is one which we Socialists therefore fully endorse.

Secondly, what makes this an even more appealing concept is that it makes multilateralism the basis of cooperation, not only within the framework of the Mediterranean Union but also as a project of regional

cooperation, which cannot act as a model for the world but could give rise to joint initiatives which could contribute to greater stability on a global level as well.

The third point which is so important for us Socialists is that we have managed to avoid creating any parallel processes. The Barcelona Process – for which, incidentally, a sum of around EUR 15.5 billion is made available in the financial perspective to 2013 – was, after all, also launched for the reasons which I have just outlined and which formed the political basis for the Mediterranean Union. Through the Mediterranean Union, the Barcelona Process is now being taken to another level. It is being strengthened and stepped up, but without any new institutions being created outside the existing EU institutions. That being the case, the Commission's role and also our role as Parliament – and, incidentally, the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly as well – is a special role. It is a role which has already been defined and which does not need or demand any new institutions or more red tape.

In political, institutional and economic terms, and in terms of the practical objectives set, we are now on the right track with the Mediterranean Union. I think that gives cause for celebration on 14 July in Paris as well.

Graham Watson, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, with his proposals for a Mediterranean Union, President Sarkozy recognised what many knew yet would not admit: that the Barcelona Process – top-down and driven by European interests – was dead in the water, leading our southern partners to opt out and a widening prosperity gap to emerge on either side of the Mediterranean.

If Europe is serious about reversing the failures of the last decade and generating development and security on its southern shores we must now learn to give as well as take. We must build on the ashes of the Barcelona Process – a true partnership based on trust, reciprocity and, above all, mutual respect.

The Mediterranean must not be a cultural dividing line but a meeting place. Joint investment in infrastructure – such as ports, sea links and energy grids – will bring our peoples together far more effectively than the high-sounding declarations which characterised the Barcelona Process.

We need investment in people too. The kind of energy which brought together the French and Germans after the last big war must be invested in bringing Europeans and North Africans together to prevent the next.

The worst possible mistake the French Presidency could make is to commit the European Union – and by extension its citizens – to a grandiose project without providing finance for such cooperation for a number of years down the line. And, as Mr Schulz said, creating a full-blown bureaucratic structure alongside the standing delegations and the External Action Service need not be the way; a focus on values must be.

Despite the worsening situation, particularly in Egypt and Israel, and the fact that we claim such values as the basis of EU foreign policy, references to human rights are mysteriously hard to find in the Commission's proposals. I hope this is something the Commission will look at.

But, these objections aside, Liberals and Democrats are pleased to show support for this Union for the Mediterranean, with one important caveat: pragmatic cooperation on economic issues must not be a substitute for promoting peace in the Middle East through the common foreign and security policy envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty.

Since the Commissioner recognises the link between economic development and peace, what would be a better sign of peace and goodwill towards our Arab neighbours than abolishing agricultural tariffs? Our much-vaunted free trade agreements have failed to boost living standards because they excluded agriculture and services, which account for two thirds of the GDP in the Middle East and North Africa. If we do not take the produce of these countries, we will end up taking their people. Reforming the CAP, providing a level playing field for goods from the Southern Mediterranean, would go a long way towards tackling the causes of record migration into Europe.

As the inimitable Doctor Johnson once said 'Life cannot subsist ... but by reciprocal concessions'. And, for the sake of the success of this Union, Europe must make the first move.

Hélène Flautre, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, the European Commission has put forward a good proposal. It has transformed a relatively clumsy political initiative – the 'Union for the Mediterranean' – into a renewed political ambition for a strengthened Barcelona Process. That is an excellent thing and, in this context, the Commission is performing its role to the letter.

We support its proposals, particularly as regards incorporating the institutions of the future project in relation to the Lisbon Treaty and its goal of a more coherent and better integrated external policy for the Union. In so doing, it is putting an end to the justified fears of *ad hoc* political manoeuvring dictated by the agreements reached at the summit or on an *à la carte* or circumstantial basis, fears fuelled largely by the misplaced initiatives of President Sarkozy to promote, for example, the proliferation of nuclear power in the region.

The mediocre results in terms of democracy and human rights were unanimously identified in 2005 as an obstacle to the Barcelona objectives. That is why the European Parliament insists that all the mechanisms aimed at strengthening democracy and the rule of law as well as the parliamentary dimension of the process and the participation of civil society must be duly guaranteed within the framework of this new ambition for the Euro-Mediterranean region.

An amendment has been tabled on the conflict in the Middle East. Ladies and gentlemen, I think that the European Parliament would be well-advised to accept it. It is right to ensure that new initiatives in the region are not dependent on resolution of the conflict, but we would also be fooling ourselves if we ignored its negative impact on the concrete capacities to develop Mediterranean projects that are relevant to the citizens.

Moreover, the *ad hoc* delegation that recently visited Palestine documented serious violations of humanitarian law and human rights, clear violations of the Oslo and Annapolis commitments. It would be futile to suggest that the persistence of this situation does not undermine profoundly the mutual trust between the partners and the civil societies in the region, trust that is nonetheless vital to the success of our Euro-Mediterranean ambitions.

Konrad Szymański, *on behalf of the UEN Group.* – (PL) Madam President, the European Union has many so-called old neighbours to the South and many so-called new ones to the East. As far as the former are concerned, there exists an instrument for external cooperation which is currently being strengthened. This strengthening process should continue, but it will not lead to any of the countries concerned joining the Union. In the case of our Eastern neighbours involved in the Neighbourhood Policy, membership of the Union is most certainly a possibility. Membership is not the aim of effective cooperation, but a successful neighbourhood policy is bound to lead in that direction.

The Barcelona Process needs new political impetus, because the 'one size fits all' Neighbourhood Policy fits neither the East nor the West. It is therefore entirely appropriate that two projects appeared on the European agenda at almost the same time, one concerning a Mediterranean Union and the other an Eastern partnership.

As a neighbour of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia I very much hope that no damaging competition will arise between the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood policies. The two should instead be mutually complementary. If we are to be successful in budgetary negotiations, for example, we need to stand shoulder to shoulder. Mutual political solidarity is called for when designing the eastern and southern aspects of neighbourhood policy. A level playing field is also urgently required at institutional, political, assistance and economic level regarding our policy towards the South and the East.

That is why I am today strongly supporting strengthening and renewal of the political framework for neighbourhood as regards the Mediterranean countries. We support the projects relating to credits, communication and energy. We also support institutional reforms affecting the South. We trust that in the future similar support will be offered for strengthening policy towards the East.

Francis Wurtz, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, the challenges involved in Europe's relationship with the people of the southern shore of the Mediterranean far exceed those of a simple neighbourhood relationship.

It is perhaps a peaceful future that hangs in the balance in this region of unparalleled division. The reasons for this situation are very clear to see. The first is the economic imbalance. Thirteen years after the launch of the Barcelona Process, not only has the promised shared prosperity not materialised; the gaps have grown wider. In fact, the obsession with free trade has taken precedence over the goal of development. In order to succeed tomorrow where we failed yesterday, a change of direction is needed. I do not see this, however.

The second problem is the humiliating treatment of migrants. The population of these countries is very young. The people want to live yet they do not see any future. Although they are deeply attached to their land, their culture, the history of their civilisation and its impressive contributions – all due respect to Mr Berlusconi – many of them are looking to Europe and they see their emigrant brothers and sisters suffering the affronts of which we are all aware: from profiling to discrimination, from detention centres to 'refoulement'.

In this regard, too, the gap has increased dramatically. Talking about a dialogue of cultures and bringing the people closer together without putting an end to these practices has absolutely no credibility whatsoever.

Finally, there is Europe's inertia regarding the Palestinian problem. There will be the retort that the Union and its Member States are Palestine's largest donors; that is true and it is a good thing. However, any observer will confirm, as the EP delegation that has just returned from the Middle East has just done, that without a firm European commitment on a political level, this aid will resolve none of the real issues.

In other words, what is expected of Europe in the Southern Mediterranean in this respect is that it finally overcomes what the former representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr de Soto, quite rightly called self-censorship with regard to Israel and the persistent violations of international law and its own commitments.

Israel must understand – and it is the Union's duty to help with this – that the normalisation of its relations with the region as a whole has a price, and that price is no more or no less than what is stipulated in the Peace Initiative of the Arab League, the Quartet's Roadmap or the Annapolis Declaration, namely the end of the occupation and resulting barbarism, and the recognition of the Palestinian State within the borders as they stood in 1967.

Europe's attitude to this matter is perhaps the decisive criterion in the success or failure of any attempt to relaunch the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

It is therefore recommended that the European Union-Israel Association Council meeting on 16 June give serious consideration to this when examining the Israeli request for the status of its partnership with the Union to be upgraded.

Graham Booth, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – Madam President, I have been asked to speak today on Euromed. This is the insane attempt to create a pan-Mediterranean bloc, joining Europe with north Africa. To the architects of this scheme, it was a brilliant idea: Europe would transfer wealth and technology to north Africa and north Africa would transfer cheap labour and oil and gas to Europe.

In reality, it is a disastrous idea. We have already seen what happens when you allow people from poor countries to have freedom of movement into richer ones. Can you imagine how much more true this will be if north Africa gets this right too? At a time of heightened international terrorism, is it a good idea to have freedom of movement from countries with known al-Qa'ida presences? After the terrorist atrocities in Madrid and London, one would have thought Europe would have learned its lessons. Clearly not!

Let us also talk about oil and gas. The north African countries know Europe can be bullied. Is it really a good idea to put our energy security in the hands of the military dictatorship in Algeria or Colonel Gadaffi in Libya, both of whom are aware of our vulnerability?

I strongly urge the EU to cease this scheme. We have already had one imperial *mare nostrum*. We do not need another.

Jean-Claude Martinez (NI). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, the Mediterranean is the region of all divisions: geographical divisions, historical divisions – in Salamin, Axion, Lepanto – demographic divisions and even philosophical divisions, between magical thinking and logical thinking, in other words the Orient and the Occident, but also the East and West, from the Egypt of Moses, then Jesus, then Mohammed, from Omar Khayyam to Baudelaire, from the plateaus of Syria to the plains of Languedoc. The Mediterranean is the hope of three monotheistic religions and the civilisation of wheat and wine, not of sauerkraut and beer or mussels in Chez Léon.

The Union for the Mediterranean is not just a matter of de-pollution or civil security. What you need for that is the fire brigade! The Mediterranean is not managed by 44 senior officials in Brussels, capital of the Mediterranean. Why not also have an Erasmus grant so that Plato and Aristotle can come and study Community law in the Bruges College?

The Mediterranean manages the affairs of the women and men of the Mediterranean: in other words prosperity, for example, of fishermen, who are asking you for it at the moment; in other words peace in the West, in the Saharan provinces of Morocco, and in the East, in Palestine.

Commissioner, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, our dreams need to be big enough for us not to lose sight of them when pursuing them, and that is why there is not a restricted union of the people of the Mediterranean.

Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE-DE). – (EL) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the Mediterranean has played a part in Europe's external relations since the beginning of European unification. Even the Treaty of Rome anticipated preferential relations with certain Mediterranean countries. The politics of the Mediterranean and the international situation have helped to develop our institutional framework because the region has always been an arena for international challenges and problems.

As is universally recognised, we did not reach the ambitious targets we set in Barcelona in 1995, so we set new ones in 2005. Our Euro-Mediterranean relations have undoubtedly given us numerous opportunities for meetings and familiarisation both bilaterally and internationally to improve contacts with the public and with parliaments.

President Sarkozy's proposed Union for the Mediterranean, and its progress under the aegis of the EU and its institutions, have highlighted how urgent it is to realise the Euro-Mediterranean dream, which has become more real and advanced on both sides. The dream has made an important contribution. The Mediterranean has been ever present in our questions, changes and plans; it has been key in the EU's balance of power and relationships. The progress this proposal represents is also proof of the mobilisation, innovation and commitment the Union is capable of in the face of major challenges.

I congratulate and thank the European Commission, particularly Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner for her work and her proposal, which in our view is balanced and integrated. Her proposal makes the most of our commitments and vested interests; it builds on the new French proposals and paves the way ahead.

Through the joint resolution, the European Parliament welcomes and supports these efforts. It will lend its support to the interesting and ambitious project which has begun. The challenges in the region are becoming ever greater and more urgent. There are deep economic and political differences, serious security problems and economic inequalities. Additionally, the economic and political environment of the Mediterranean is becoming increasingly complex. The US as well as China and Russia have to be taken into account, so we must become more prudent and effective.

Pasqualina Napolitano (PSE). – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the European Parliament wished to react immediately to the Commission's communication. This is because, as the Commissioner herself said, we are keen to see a revival, renewal and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

We support the Commission's view that the European Union should be the key institutional and political player – on the European side – in building the Union for the Mediterranean. This may also encourage our partners in the South to cooperate more closely among themselves, something that has hitherto proved exceedingly difficult.

We agree that the task of the Union for the Mediterranean should be economic and territorial integration among the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, to be brought about by means of major infrastructure projects, and we also believe that the examples put forward by the Commission are appropriate.

For this purpose, however, it must be clear who does what. Above all, any overlap between the role of the Commission and that of the prospective secretariat must be avoided. As for the revival of the partnership, we are of course keen to bolster its political dimension: we are interested not just in dialogue between governments but in the role of parliaments, in the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliament and in its work and that of civil society, where I would strongly emphasise that the social partners play a fundamental role.

Finally, it must be clear that the projects set out in the Commission's communication should not be carried out to the detriment of regional programmes already under way in the culture, heritage, training and audiovisual fields. In this regard we would appeal for the Erasmus Mundus programme to be better resourced and for the Euromed Audiovisual programme to be refinanced.

Thierry Cornillet (ALDE). – (FR) Madam President, welcome thus to the relaunch, 13 years later, of the process governing the multilateral relations between the European Union and the countries bordering the Mediterranean.

Our resolution makes no mistake. There was no misplaced initiative. On the contrary, there was a timely and welcome initiative: a new initiative, new impetus, new momentum. That proves that it was at least possible to perfect the Barcelona Process and we will all focus our efforts in that direction.

Welcome thus to this 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean'. It is nevertheless the first time that the instrument has been given priority over the objective. I have no doubt that the Union for the Mediterranean will remain as a generic name, but I do not want to fall out with anyone. The Union for the Mediterranean is the egg of Columbus, is it not! The Mediterranean is a lake. We all live on its shores; some are organised, others are less so or not at all – such as the Southern countries – but we must work together. In this respect, we must begin – and the Commission underlined this perfectly – with specific projects relating to pollution, energy production and jobs for young people, which are essential for the Mediterranean countries.

Welcome, too, to the parliamentary relaunch in less tangible fields, in human rights, in gender issues. However, I must conclude by saying that there will surely be no need for a third relaunch.

We absolutely have to succeed this time because if we do not we would be showing ourselves to be enemies of our own interests.

Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, a great deal has been said about the French President's idea to equip and arm the countries of North Africa and the Middle East with a nuclear capability for civilian but also military use within the framework of the Mediterranean Union. Let me quote Asterix the Gaul here: 'They must be crazy, the French!' However, I am now even more concerned about this development, given that these plans have been taken up and are fervently supported by the European Commission as well.

Around two weeks ago, a meeting took place between Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Commission. Mr Barroso was in attendance. An agreement was signed between the IAEA and Euratom, or the Commission, which aims to drive forward the proliferation of nuclear energy. There is apparently a desire to equip the same developing countries that Mr Sarkozy has his eye on, and put them on track and support them in all manner of ways so that they can deploy nuclear energy.

This raises a great many questions, in my view. First of all, Commissioner, you were originally supposed to be a co-signatory of this agreement. I have the relevant draft agreement available to me. Why did you distance yourself from it? Could this be because there is actually no basis for this agreement in the Treaties? Secondly, what is Mr Solana's position on the signing of this type of agreement? I cannot imagine that from a security perspective, and especially in view of the difficult situation with Iran, this agreement could possibly gain Europe's backing.

Since this all appears to have taken place in secret, I would be very pleased to receive an explanation from the Commissioner, particularly as she comes from a country, namely Austria, which has a highly critical stance towards nuclear matters.

Salvatore Tatarella (UEN). – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Schulz will be pleased to hear that I do not intend to speak French. That, however, does not prevent me from unreservedly backing President Sarkozy's initiative, which has pushed – or even propelled – Europe into a position from where it can reclaim a vital role in the Mediterranean area.

The merit of the Sarkozy initiative is that it responds to the question of outcomes from the Barcelona Process in anything but a tame manner. Whenever we ask ourselves what the Mediterranean has gained from the Barcelona Process, our objective, serious and truthful answer is inevitably unsatisfactory. There has of course been the war, and there is still conflict in the Middle East. When it was decided in Barcelona in 1995 to launch this new European policy, the idea was to manage the post-conflict peace. That was not the case then and is not now. Europe is still dragging its feet, and the French President's initiative strikes us as well-timed.

We endorse the Commission's initiative and the compromise which has emerged from it. We back it, yet we believe that it is still insufficient with regard to the role that Europe can and must play in the Mediterranean. Some people feared, and still fear, that the French initiative might jeopardise European cohesion; I do not believe there is any such danger. No such danger exists whenever Europe is asked to focus more on politics and less on the market.

Patrick Louis (IND/DEM). – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, today's debate is crucial. One of the keys to the future of our continent lies in our capacity to prevent a deep split from dividing the Mediterranean Basin into two antagonistic sides, culturally and economically. In spite of all the differences between the two shores of the *mare nostrum*, what unites us is even stronger than what separates us.

That is why Nicolas Sarkozy's initiative is excellent in principle: it breathes new life into a Barcelona Process that is marking time. I do have some reservations about the method, however.

When France signed up to the European commitments in the various Treaties, from Maastricht to Lisbon, it agreed to transfer to the Community – and this is something I regret – a number of its prerogatives, notably in the area of foreign affairs. With all due respect to Mr Guénot, that is unfortunately the world in which these Treaties oblige us to live. That is why, in my opinion, it is somewhat inconsistent to launch such a project, to great media hullabaloo. In reality, France no longer has the power to force it on anyone. The only way to move it forward was to make use of all of the diplomatic and human resources available to France to convince its partners to carry out the reform of the Barcelona Process, without giving the impression of undoing what had already been achieved, even if what existed was far from satisfactory.

The result of this inconsistency can be seen today because it is certainly no coincidence that this debate was postponed from yesterday, when the Council could have taken part, to this morning, when only the Commission is represented. This must be more than a sign: the Commission has no intention of relinquishing this matter.

Tokia Saïfi (PPE-DE). – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, I am pleased today that the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' is at the top of the European agenda.

The Commission's analysis seems to be pertinent. Based on the *acquis* of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation undertaken since 1995, it breathes new life into the process with a view to overcoming the existing gaps and shortcomings.

I am pleased, in this regard, that the objectives set out here are founded on the principles of parity and equality, which are at the heart of the proposed Union for the Mediterranean. The regional projects to be carried out will also make the Euromed partnership more visible and, above all, bring it closer to the citizens. It is in fact ownership by the people that will guarantee a strong partnership and greater regional cooperation in the Southern Mediterranean.

In pursuing this objective, the official role to be played by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly will therefore be crucial. This Assembly will finally be recognised as a form of parliamentary support to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Finally, I would like to mention the governance of the project. Our objective must continue to be to strengthen the political relationships, share out the responsibilities, promote equality and increase the number of meetings between the Euro-Mediterranean partners. We must not dilute the political content of this project under the weight of an institutional mechanism that would certainly lead to inertia. We should also ensure that the project is truly efficient by setting up a North-South co-presidency, which would guarantee equality and shared responsibility, and a secretariat, which should be responsible for the governance of the Union for the Mediterranean and for monitoring the implementation of the specific projects.

The Union for the Mediterranean is a major step forward and, as you said, Commissioner, it will launch – I hope – a new era with our partners, for we share a common destiny.

Carlos Carnero González (PSE). – (ES) Madam President, since there is life outside the European Parliament I imagine that some of us have the opportunity now and again to go to the cinema at the weekend.

I did so on Sunday past and I saw a film that I highly recommend, and I do not have any financial interests in its production or distribution: it is called *The Yacoubian Building* and it looks at the political, economic, social and cultural problems experienced by a large Mediterranean country, Egypt.

At no point in that film, which is almost two and a half hours long, is there any mention of the European Union, of our presence, of the Barcelona Process. Does that mean that the Barcelona Process does not exist, that it has not been successful? No, we must not confuse things. It has not been visible enough, but it has contained elements that have benefited the people and that have today become a point of reference for a different type of external policy based on cooperation and based on equality.

The Barcelona Process is the exact opposite of the historical relationship between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. It is not a neo-colonial process, it is not a process of demands; it is a process of partnership, a process of association, and we must not forget that.

This process has not been able to change the major dynamics of the Mediterranean, but how could we expect to change in just over 10 years dynamics that have existed for hundreds of years? Nonetheless, it has succeeded in giving a new direction to some of these dynamics. We therefore need to strengthen it on a political and institutional level, through programmes, through funding. That is the Union for the Mediterranean.

The European Commission states this clearly in its communication and this Parliament is thus going to support the communication today and support what the vast majority of European governments want: more Barcelona Process, more Barcelona Process, more Barcelona Process. That is the Union for the Mediterranean: not more structures but the possibility of the people living a better life thanks to cooperation between equals.

I want to say that in that case the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly must be the legislative body that lends democratic legitimacy to this process. It is no coincidence that you, Mrs Rothe, a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, are chairing this sitting today.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (ALDE). – Madam President, I thank all colleagues who have spoken and who have supported the Barcelona Process over many years. It is a wonderful concept and one that deserves to succeed. I particularly welcome President Pöttering's initiative in forming some structure inside this Parliament to push forward the Barcelona Process, and President Sarkozy's commitment to strengthening the process as well with different aspects.

This Monday, 9 June, marks the opening of the European Union Mediterranean University. Colleagues, I want you to note that date. We say that our success rests on dialogue, and the European Mediterranean Process should be exemplified by a successful university. I congratulate the Slovenian Presidency for offering the seat of the University, but I ask colleagues in all committees – and the Commission and the Council of Presidents – why has no budget been set aside for the University? Surely we should not rely on one single presidential State – in this case, Slovenia – in furthering the future of the University. If we want the University to succeed, we have to find a budget for the years ahead.

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE-DE). – (ES) Madam President, the Mediterranean's history is much more profound than its geography. You do not need to come from that region to understand, as the Commissioner rightly pointed out, the major problems it faces: migration, mafias trafficking human beings, which unfortunately is not mentioned in the motion for a resolution, drugs, the economic gap between the two sides of the Mediterranean and, of course, radical Islamic fundamentalism, which is one of the greatest black holes in international politics.

Hence the importance of the situation in the Mediterranean for the stability and security of our own political project. We therefore welcome this Commission communication: we welcome its diligence, as it has rapidly fulfilled a European Council mandate; we welcome its realism, as it puts things into perspective; and we welcome its common sense, as it underlines additionality and the multilateral nature of the initiatives taking shape in this new initiative, aimed precisely at breathing new life into the Barcelona Process.

I want to point out, Madam President, that I do not agree with some of the criticisms that have been made during this debate. I believe that, when necessary, the European Union and the Commission give priority to the ideals over the figures and it is clear that in its external action the European Union always tries to defend the principles in which we believe. However, it is also true, Madam President, that we frequently have to move from the Beatitudes and grand principles to the accounting books in order to ensure credibility and realism, and move from words to actions in the policies we wish to promote.

Therefore, Madam President, it is very easy to criticise and propose initiatives, but those initiatives have to be assessed in relation to the financial resources that the Member States give the European Union to implement the policies appropriately. I thus believe, Madam President, that within the framework of the current financial perspective, we have what we have, and if we do not use those resources we will be unable to realise the ambitions that we are striving for as a European Union.

Kader Arif (PSE). – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the launch of what was at the time the Mediterranean Union gave rise to controversy and concerns both in Europe and among our Mediterranean partners.

This initiative clearly could not be a purely Franco-French or Euro-European initiative, nor the expression of a security-oriented vision of Euro-Mediterranean relations.

I therefore welcome the Commissioner's words this morning and the specific proposals put forward, which respond to some of our concerns. This common project must consist of collective dialogue, based on parity

and co-management. However, the Euro-Mediterranean relationship is an asymmetric relationship that is both emotive and irrational. It is obviously asymmetric when it comes to trade: both North-South trade and South-South trade. We therefore need to look at whether or not a free trade zone should be set up in 2010. It is irrational because it is based on relations linked to a history that is often painful and complicated, and that is today magnified by what certain conservatives want, namely the clash of civilisations, a confrontation between the Western bloc and the Eastern bloc.

Consequently, if had to take decisions, the first would be to look at this Euro-Mediterranean relationship dispassionately and rationally. We must be rational in terms of strengthening the role of the parliaments, notably the role of the EMPA; we must be rational in terms of our proposals on good governance; we must be rational in terms of the aid that can be provided from a South-South perspective; we must be rational, too, when it comes to the free movement of people and the Israel-Palestine issue. We also need to be dispassionate because if we cannot we will not create this area of peace and we will not prevent this clash of civilisations that some people desire.

Ioannis Kasoulides (PPE-DE). – Madam President, the new impetus given to the Barcelona Process Mediterranean Union has been well presented by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner and previous speakers. The ideas of Barcelona are now even more pertinent than ever. The prosperity gap between the European Union and most Mediterranean countries has unfortunately increased. Gradual free trade with the European Union has not attracted the domestic and foreign investment needed to boost the standard of living of our Mediterranean partners.

A lot will depend now on the success of the new projects proposed, which must be visible and tangible to ordinary citizens on both sides of the Mediterranean, and affect and attract the interest of the private sector: projects dealing with topics such as civil protection, the effects of climate change, drought and the lack of water, forest fires, the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea, and the development of technology to make the best use of solar energy for the benefit of both sides of the Mediterranean.

Common projects for all Mediterranean countries, north and south, are one of the keys to success. The issues of migration, social integration, justice and security are also of mutual benefit and visibility. Let us not forget that our partners are now transit countries for the waves of migration from sub-Saharan Africa.

The question of funds, particularly with a more ambitious project such as this one, remains open. The more tangible and visible the benefits of this project, the more willing the Member States will be to provide funds.

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Vural Öger (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, I would like to congratulate President Sarkozy for once, albeit reluctantly, at this juncture. With the rumpus that he has created over EU-Mediterranean relations, he has actually managed to give the Barcelona Process, which has existed since 1995, the higher profile and visibility that it deserves, and has unleashed a new debate about our neighbouring region to the South.

Looking at the outcomes, however, it is clear that Mr Sarkozy's original idea, launched in February 2007, has failed on three counts. Firstly, a possible alternative to EU accession for Turkey was effectively banished by Spain and Italy with the declaration adopted in Rome in December 2007. Then Chancellor Merkel ensured that EU-Mediterranean relations would be developed further within the existing EU structures. Finally, the Commission has now applied the brakes to Mr Sarkozy's ambitious plans for the secretariat and leadership structure of the project. It is apparent, in other words, that go-it-alone approaches by Mr Sarkozy will not be tolerated in the European Union.

Simon Busuttil (PPE-DE). – (MT) We needed this new beginning; we needed this new energy for the Mediterranean policy that is so important for the Mediterranean as well as for Europe. Perhaps the biggest flaw in the Barcelona Process was that our neighbouring countries in the central Mediterranean always felt that this was a European process that was imposed on them and there was not enough of a sense of equality and a sense of membership. At the summit on 13 July we need to ensure that we are building this new Union for the Mediterranean project on the basis of true membership and true equality. We should build it on structures that are separate and not impose our prospects on others. This naturally means that there are obligations as well as rights on both sides, not just on one side. We welcome this proposal with a mixture of scepticism and at the same time hope. I hope that hope will triumph over scepticism.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE). – (PT) The Barcelona Process exists only because a series of central European policy issues are affected by our relationship with the South. Energy, the fight against terrorism, demography and immigration, economic development and the fight against crime are some of these issues. However, we must recognise that the Barcelona Process has not in itself been a success.

Europe's big success has in fact been to promote reforms in candidate countries. However, the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean cannot join the European Union but are, in some cases, our most problematic neighbours. Therefore, the question is how we must change our strategy to relaunch the process so that the new Union for the Mediterranean is not just another fine idea.

Do we believe that the way forward is support for specific investments within the framework of truly open markets? Do we believe in the broadest possible access to Community recovery instruments? Do we defend the idea of the amount of aid depending on the quality of the reforms to be undertaken? I believe so, because the Mediterranean's problems are also our problems. We must bear in mind that, if we fail to understand what has gone wrong in Barcelona, we will be unable to introduce a new dynamic into the relationship with our southern partners.

Erna Hennicot-Schoepges (PPE-DE). – (FR) Mr President, I would like to ask the Commissioner, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, not to look on this Barcelona Process as a mere economic process. When Europe needs energy, it turns to Africa to benefit from its sun and sand. Is that not a little too little? Should we not be implementing this process through work in the field of culture? We will be dealing with countries that are very diverse, proud countries, countries that have a history and a great culture. Should we not be making efforts to improve social cohesion through in-depth cultural work?

Not a single document refers to the Anna Lindt Foundation, which for some years now has been striving to promote cooperation. I would also be very keen to see further progress, too, on the proposed Euro-Arab university.

Marusya Ivanova Lyubcheva (PSE). – (BG) Mr. President, Mme Commissioner, The issue related to the establishment of a Black Sea Union is of strategic significance. This is a process for joint future development concerning not only the increased influence of the European Union and economic cooperation, but also goodneighbourliness.

The Mediterranean region with its rich cultural and historical layers and modern political and economic influence is particularly important. I view this as a process, a step towards a more global role of the EU as a whole rather than of any single country.

At the same time, the Mediterranean axis in the development of the EU policies should be linked to the Eastern dimension of the EU strategic projects. The Black Sea areas has always been linked to the Mediterranean and thus both should be comparable and put on equal footing today.

This is the only way for us to achieve new efficiency, greater influence of the European Union's policies and values. It will lead to new added value of the EU policies.

Marios Matsakis (ALDE). – Mr President, I would say to the Commissioner that planning to build motorways will not solve the serious problems facing the Mediterranean area, unless she is intent on convincing President Sarkozy to build a six-lane motorway linking France with Turkey!

Commissioner, I was disappointed with your introductory speech, because you did not address some of the major political problems in the Mediterranean. I refer, for example, to the occupation by Israel of land belonging to the Palestinians; to the occupation of Cyprus by Turkey; and to the continuing colonisation, in this the 21st century, of part of Morocco by Spain, which has two colonies in Morocco, and to Britain's two colonies in Cyprus and – I understand – one colony in Spain.

Unless you address those serious issues, we will not be able to turn the theoretical plans for a Mediterranean Union into a reality.

Ryszard Czarnecki (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, Europe really does breathe through two lungs. One of these lungs is the Mediterranean dimension we are currently debating. The other is the Eastern dimension, which includes countries sharing some of their borders with Poland. By way of example I could name Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The Eastern dimension also includes countries in the Caucasus, such as Georgia and Armenia.

It is right and proper that today, 13 years after Barcelona, we should be devoting so much time to the vital Mediterranean dimension of our European policy. It should be emphasised, however, that this is only part of a greater whole. The policy on the countries of the Mediterranean Basin is necessary and needs to be renewed, but it is only one element of the European Union's broader foreign policy. Our policy towards future members of the European Union should be a very important part of the latter. To put it plainly, I do not believe that any of the Mediterranean countries we are today discussing will join the Union. Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia are, however, bound to become Members.

Marie Anne Isler Béguin (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, as far as I am concerned, it takes two to tango. What I want to know is whether there is really enough interest on the other side of the Mediterranean. When we see today the dance the French Government is having to perform to actually bring the Mediterranean heads of state together, to get them to come to Paris on 13 July, I wonder if there is really the same commitment on the other side.

I want to tell you that your revisited project is extremely interesting. The European Union was built after the war on the basis of coal and steel. If we are proposing to our partners that we build a project for the 21st century, based on climate change, on renewable energy, on the restoration of a Mediterranean environment that has been completely ruined, then yes, we can support this project. However, where is the consistency, Commissioner? What can we say to this solo by Mr Sarkozy, who even today, before his presidency, is urging Algeria to sign an agreement on the establishment of a nuclear plant? I think that that is a clear example of the contradiction that perhaps exists between the Council and the Commission.

Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Matsakis is quite right: I agree with much of what he said. There have always been difficulties and problems for the states bordering the *mare nostrum*, as it was called 2000 years ago.

However, what Mr Watson, Chairman of the Liberal Group, said is also true in my opinion: we must learn to give as well as take. I would therefore call upon Italy's new government under Prime Minister Berlusconi to heed the pleas and entreaties of Colonel Gaddafi, whom we were very eager to please at the time of the Bulgarian nurses affair, ignoring everything that lay behind it. He has repeatedly requested Italy to build a motorway in his country. A motorway will benefit not just President Gaddafi but all the inhabitants of North Africa, so we will be showing our good will and doing something positive for the Mediterranean as a whole.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (PSE). – (PL) Mr President, the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East are strategically important regions from the European Union's point of view. It is abundantly clear that an area of peace and economic stability based on the principles of democracy, solidarity and cooperation must be created if we are to rise to common challenges. It is also necessary to revive and develop the Barcelona Process, so as to establish a strong partnership in the area of foreign and security policy with a view to combating terrorism.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership cannot focus exclusively on issues pertaining to the economy and trade, however. It should be accompanied by strengthened regional cooperation, closer social integration and by cooperation in the area of protection of the natural environment. In addition, we should emphasise the need to strengthen policies aimed at increasing the role of women in Mediterranean societies, by promoting gender equality. Respect for customs and traditions must not infringe the fundamental rights of women.

In conclusion, I should like to welcome the Commission's proposal on the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. The role and democratic legitimacy of the latter should be reinforced.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Member of the Commission. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will continue in French. Perhaps Mr Schulz does not agree, but I believe that President Sarkozy provided the impulse for the Union for the Mediterranean. That is why I think that for once I am nevertheless going to continue to speak in that language.

First of all, I see, ladies and gentlemen, that this debate or this matter has provoked strong reactions. Everyone has something to say on the issue and that is extremely important. It is true, as far as I am concerned, that peace could perhaps hang in the balance in the Mediterranean. It is also true that there is still a gap between the two shores: it is shrinking but it is still there. We must take account of the progress that has been made: macro-economic stability, lower inflation, greatly improved human rights. Naturally, there is still a great deal to be done. On the one hand, reforms are badly needed and these reforms must be more rapid and more comprehensive. In addition, the issue of trade and investment is vital. I do not agree with Mr Wurtz that the Barcelona Process is dead. No, as I have always said, it has been very difficult to implement it because of the

existing political problems, and that is true. When there was discussion of the political problems, as we know, it was about the Barcelona Process. Unfortunately, these problems will remain even if we try to overcome these issues with very specific projects, which is something I support. I therefore believe that this idea is a good idea and I think that we have renewed it through a pragmatic and concrete approach that is, of course, fully inclusive.

As regards free trade and the free trade agreements, ladies and gentlemen, I must point out that as a result of the excessively long transition periods, 2010 is the first year in which we will be able to implement these agreements. In fact, we still do not have any free trade agreements. As far as agriculture is concerned, we are in the middle of negotiations but it is very complicated, for the other side too, because it involved not just giving, but also receiving. These negotiations are always difficult. Free trade agreements with Tunisia and Israel will enter into force in 2010. A similar agreement with Morocco is being finalised, but considerable efforts are still needed. The last country concerned will be Egypt. You can thus see that things are moving very slowly, and that is not because of the process; it is because of the countries themselves, which do not wish to move any faster. That is important to point out. In spite of everything, this new idea is a good idea, an opportunity, and I hope that the partners are going to make use of it. It is true, too, Mrs Isler-Béguin, that the partners clearly have to want to dance. That is why the Commission spoke with each of them to ensure that its proposals reflected their concerns and their point of view.

When it comes to human rights, ladies and gentlemen, I must point out that I myself would not have done anything if there had been no human rights. However, the Barcelona Process remains; that is the idea. The institutions are also involved. In principle, the institutions play a role, and that applies to the Anna Lindt Foundation, too. Of course, the Anna Lindt Foundation is present, and with a new presidency and a new director these aspects should be further enhanced. These things are not lost. The Neighbourhood Policy that I mentioned, which is a bilateral policy, also remains of course, because through its action plans it is genuinely trying to strengthen and promote the reforms. Do not think, therefore, that it is not involved. That is the real value added of the projects that we have actually implemented and emphasised.

As regards the Euro-Mediterranean University in Portorož, I think first of all that it is an excellent idea by the Slovenian Presidency. I am personally going to attend its inauguration; I have been invited to it and I fully intend to be there.

As regards funding, first and foremost, since it is a Slovenian idea, it is only natural that Slovenia must also make a contribution to it, which it will do to the tune of EUR 1 million. I have also been asked for a contribution, which is why I have tried to find something among funds that, in principle, are already allocated. That is far from easy. I have found EUR 1 million, which I am going to add to this project. However, there are other instruments and I have informed the presidency of them. Firstly, there are the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, which simply need to be re-distributed in Slovenia, and secondly, there are the funds for research and education. Thus there are funds available. In addition, you are of course all aware of the Erasmus grants, which are still applicable. That is something new that we are going to strengthen.

I would like to talk briefly about culture, Madam. I think that someone mentioned that Robert Schuman once said that if we were to start building the European Union again, we should start with culture. That is true, but while there is so much poverty, so much illiteracy, etc., we have to do other things, too, and I can repeat what I said in relation to human rights: all the culture programmes remain in place and there is quite a number of them.

Finally, I will say a brief word on the secretariat because that was a very precise question. In the light of the different views expressed, we concluded that, as indicated in our communication, the secretariat should be asked to perform the role of making proposals for joint initiatives, which would then be adopted by political bodies, and ensuring the necessary follow-up of project-related decisions taken by the heads of state or government. The secretariat could also have a separate legal personality with an autonomous status. The detailed modalities have yet to be clarified.

I will conclude with a few words on the nuclear issue. Madam, the Memorandum of Understanding that our President signed with the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, relates to safety and security. I personally support it and I think that everyone should because we cannot choose what energy sources the countries use. Each country has the right, as you said, to have some reservations about nuclear energy, and you know that we ourselves do. However, the countries must at least have the opportunity to do as they wish. As such, safety and security are crucial, and those are the issues dealt with by the Memorandum.

I apologise, Mr President, but as I said at the beginning, this debate has provoked strong reactions.

President. – To conclude this debate I have received six motions for a resolution¹ tabled in accordance with Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at 11 a.m.

Written statements (Rule 142)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – It is a pleasure to hear statements from the Council and the Commission regarding the Barcelona Process and the proposal for a Union for the Mediterranean. The latter is to be initiated on 13 July in Paris during the French Presidency.

The Government of Malta has issued a position paper on the said statements. I fully agree with the proposals being made regarding the Union for the Mediterranean. As it is important not to duplicate efforts and energies, the suggestion relating to maritime activities is laudable.

Malta has offered to host a secretariat to overview the implementation of such proposals and I fully endorse this offer, not only because of the unique geographical position of the island in the Mediterranean but also because we have the infrastructure, personnel and experience to host such an institute.

To conclude, I would like to mention that, just over thirty years ago, it was a Labour Government that managed to bring world attention to the importance of the Mediterranean and the necessity of collaboration between the countries bordering the Northern and Southern shores of this sea.

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), in writing. – (IT) I welcome the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean, which will help to improve and intensify relations with our Mediterranean partners and will promote mutual awareness, growth, employment and training in the EU and the 12 non-European countries concerned.

Promoting peace and democracy, immigration controls, economic relations and raw materials supplies: these have historically been the key points of my country's neighbourhood policy with the Mediterranean countries. Bettino Craxi was a pioneer in this regard.

The Union for the Mediterranean will help to facilitate the completion of cross-border projects that are important for the entire area, serving to improve the motorways of the seas, combat marine pollution, improve civil protection, create a better-integrated energy market and develop new renewable technologies.

The Union for the Mediterranean must contribute to promoting democracy and resolving the conflicts that are still destabilising the Middle East and the Western Sahara, with assistance from the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly, which must be fully involved.

3. Hygiene of foodstuffs (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A6-0143/2008) by Horst Schnellhardt, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation No 11 concerning the abolition of discrimination in transport rates and conditions, in implementation of Article 79(3) of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs (COM(2007)0090 - C6-0211/2007 - 2007/0037B(COD)).

Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the Commission. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, today we are talking about a project which serves as a pilot for one of the largest and most important policy programmes initiated by this Commission, namely freeing small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe from unnecessary administrative burdens. In other words, it is about cutting red tape. We are not talking about problems of veterinary law today; let me just make that clear. If we were, I would not be here.

This is about reducing administrative burdens in a way which will strengthen the European economy and thus make a contribution to creating jobs. The Commission is fully aware that cutting administrative costs must never result in less safety for our citizens, so this is not about lowering standards. It is about enforcing

standards in such a way that unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles are removed for our companies. We will be very strict on enforcing this fundamental principle in this case as well.

Let me emphasise that the Commission has not the slightest intention of changing the substance of the rules on the hygiene of foodstuffs. The identification of hazards and the designation of procedural steps in the production process so that hazards can be eliminated remain our central concern. We are not lowering existing standards of food hygiene in any way; instead, we want to establish more clarity. We would like to ensure that the existing flexible provisions on record-keeping can be applied more effectively. This will not entail greater complexity for the relevant authorities in the Member States, for already the responsibility for compliance with the regulations lies with the food producers, not with the authorities.

We want to establish a rule for micro-enterprises which exempts them from certain requirements of the existing Regulation. We are talking about the very small family firms: bakeries, small food stores, market stalls, cafes and bars, shops at petrol stations and mini-markets. Why, you might well ask, do we require these small family firms, none which has anything to do with the internal market, to undergo the same bureaucratic procedures as the major supermarket chains? That is a good question, and it is the question that we are here to discuss.

Let me emphasise that the rules apply to all food producers and companies involved in the production, processing and sale of foods, irrespective of size. The rules do not apply to foods designed for private household consumption, and they do not apply to the producers of small quantities of unprocessed products for local retailers, such as farming, hunting and fishing. The current flexible rules on record-keeping make no distinction between the various sizes of companies. For the purposes of clarity, let me explain: the small corner shop where you can buy your food here in Brussels at 10 o'clock at night must comply with precisely the same regulations as the giant supermarket chains. My question is this: can that possibly be fair?

Due to the nature of their business operations, it goes without saying that these very complex and comprehensive provisions are easy for major companies to cope with, but that is not the case for micro-enterprises. For the formal application of the HACCP system, food producers must undertake a hazard analysis. This can be a complex and burdensome task requiring expert input. In order to reduce the burdens associated with this type of analysis, the Regulation already allows small food producers to make use of good practice guidelines which have been drawn up for the relevant sector. They already exist for bakeries, breweries, butchers' shops and restaurants in various Member States, but they do not exist everywhere.

One objective of the Commission proposal is to ensure that the rules on possible exemptions, which are already established in principle in the Regulation and the accompanying guidelines, are being used efficiently. What does this mean in practice? Well this brings us to the heart of the matter. If, during the first stage of the HACCP process, a food business operator can prove that either there are no hazards that must be prevented, eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels, or that identified hazards are sufficiently and regularly controlled through the implementation of general and specific food hygiene requirements, then the operator should be exempt from all the other requirements of the HACCP Directive. Let me put it in straightforward terms: this flexibility is already available under the current Directive, but it is not being applied by all the Member States. The Commission's proposal is therefore presented as a fast track action within the framework of our Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union. The proposal has met with some resistance in the Council and in some Member States. I am aware of that. These Member States do not appear to attach as much importance to reducing administrative burdens and cutting the costs of red tape – especially for their SMEs – as the Commission and the European Parliament do.

The impression which we have gained, however, is that this debate has so far been conducted only between civil servants in the Member States; it would seem that their politicians have not yet addressed the issue. In my view, the politicians in the Member States whose civil servants have shown such resistance to the proposal cannot possibly justify to the public why their country is resisting a Commission proposal which could make life easier for hundreds of thousands of their micro-enterprises and small businesses. At that moment, the frequent agitation against Brussels – this 'bureaucratic monster' which is supposedly determined to regulate and restrict every aspect of people's lives – would be revealed as mere propaganda and would collapse, and it would become apparent who is actually responsible for the excessive red tape.

From the Commission's perspective, this opposition is regrettable, as this proposal constitutes an important, substantive and symbolic element of our Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union. I am very grateful to Mr Schnellhardt for his report and his active support. I would urge you all to give it your backing, for I am convinced that a clear political message from Parliament of the kind

that could be sent out today will create the necessary political momentum in the Council, too, to get this proposal through.

Horst Schnellhardt, *rapporteur*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, with this report, we are making a contribution to cutting red tape. We have succeeded in making it clear that it is, and should be, possible to ease the burden associated with the implementation of HACCP criteria, especially for small businesses, without lowering or jeopardising our high hygiene standards.

A priority – as the Commissioner has already said – is to ease the burden associated with record-keeping. I would just like to remind you that these options were already available in the hygiene package which came into force in 2006. However, we have noted that following this paradigm shift in the area of hygiene, difficulties have arisen in the context of implementation.

It has always been the stated aim of Parliament and the Commission to preserve diversity of food production in a European Union of 27 Member States. It is only right and proper that small butchers' shops, for example, should be able to continue to operate in future too. However, the information that we have received from various countries is that in some regions, some small companies are finding economic survival increasingly difficult. That is why it is essential to draw attention to the flexibility built into the regulations and help it to become a reality. This – nothing else – is what we have emphasised clearly and unequivocally in this report.

Maintaining flexibility means that we mention the focus on small and medium-sized enterprises only in the recitals. This makes it possible, for example, for companies which have 11, not 10, employees, let us say, to benefit from favourable treatment so that they too can apply for the administrative burden to be eased: provided, of course, that they can prove that either there are no hazards or that identified hazards are sufficiently and regularly controlled. The report also emphasises that the food business operator is responsible for furnishing the proof that either there are no hazards that must be prevented, eliminated or reduced to acceptable levels, or that identified hazards are sufficiently and regularly controlled through the implementation of general and specific food hygiene requirements.

In 2006 we adopted a hygiene package which applies as it stands in the EU27. That is why I fail to understand the amendment tabled by Mrs Corbey, which states that it should be a matter for the Member States whether to allow any easing of burdens in HACCP implementation. This would create new subsidiarity scenarios, which was actually what we were trying to avoid with the Regulation; in other words, we do not want any distortions of competition. The adoption of Mrs Corbey's amendment would also conflict with the intentions of the Regulation itself: in other words, the regulation would conflict with itself. That is certainly not what we are trying to achieve!

The text adopted in committee is certainly acceptable, but it explicitly restricts the option of easing the burdens to small and medium-sized enterprises. The strong involvement of the authorities, too, is out of step with the principles of the Regulation. In the Regulations themselves, it is made very clear that food businesses have a responsibility to maintain good hygiene practice and must furnish proof that they are controlling any risks.

There have been repeated objections to the effect that a review of the regulations is due in 2009 so no new measures are needed now. I take issue with this view. By 2009 all food-producing companies must be licensed. Problems are likely to arise in this licensing process. This will trigger a debate and is likely to put at risk the survival of the small butchers I have already mentioned, for example. In fact, that was the starting point underlying the Commission's intention to bring forward this proposal. It is very important, therefore, for the European Parliament to send out a clear signal about the intention established in the relevant Regulation. This signal is sent out, first and foremost, to food companies and the regulatory authorities.

The European Parliament has a strong track record in cutting red tape, and should do so again now, by giving its seal of approval to these regulatory provisions.

Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs*. – (EL) Mr President, I dare say I shall not use up my two minutes. I merely wish to point out that the Committee on Legal Affairs, on examining the legal principles, considered Article 95 to be the legal basis for the first part, and Articles 95 and 175 for the second part.

The opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs will be taken into account when validating the decision.

Péter Olajos, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (HU) Thank you very much, Mr President. For European citizens of the 21st century, health and the consumption of good-quality foodstuffs are of overriding

importance. Our task as MEPs is to guarantee this, but to do this we need legislation and procedures such as HACCP to guarantee the interests of consumers.

However, it is just as important that we do not go overboard and over-regulate our lives, because in doing so we would not serve quality of life but bureaucracy. In my view, the present compromise recommendation points in a good direction. Experience up to now has shown that the HACCP provisions currently in force are unjustifiably too stringent in many cases. Moreover, they cannot always be applied in the hospitality and hotels sector, since they assume the conditions and working methods of the food industry.

Despite this, the new Member States, including Hungary, have implemented the HACCP provisions to the full, and even beyond. Our companies have suffered from this, many have abandoned their traditions and practices that are hundreds of years old, but this cannot be our goal, so we need to make changes.

Firstly, it is important to emphasise that restaurants are not food factories, so they must not be required to follow the same provisions, since this erodes quality and traditions. Let us not forget that there were Michelin stars before the HACCP. We must reduce the exaggerated number of administrative duties. I support the fact that exemption from the HACCP should only apply to micro-businesses and SMEs that are able to monitor food hygiene.

I regret the fact that, while micro-businesses are taxable, the exemption of SMEs is hidden in the text. It is important to state and declare this clearly. Finally, the system must be more flexible than it is now. The competent national authority should decide what common sense dictates in a given case. I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on his report.

Dorette Corbey, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, better regulations, who does not want that? Our Group greatly appreciates the efforts of Commissioner Verheugen to cut down on excessive bureaucracy. Anything that we can do to help small and medium-sized enterprises, we must do. I have set to work on his proposals on food hygiene and I have been making enquiries in the Netherlands. My colleagues have been doing the same in their own countries. How are the bakers, butchers and corner shops doing all over Europe?

We have already heard from Sweden about the problem of pieces of cake being served in the back of the church. Complaints have come from the Netherlands about the rules that theatres and cinemas have to follow. In both of these countries, however, it turned out that the hygiene laws were not the cause of the problem. Other messages have come in too though: from small shops in the United Kingdom which have made great efforts over the last two years to apply the HACCP principles and were proud to have managed it all. Should Parliament now go and say that it is all unnecessary?

That brings us to my next point. In our last term of office, we worked hard on the reform of the general food law. We had to do this because of the shortcomings in food safety and a number of major food scandals. The essence of the general food law is that the responsibility for food safety rests with the producer. The public authorities have a supervisory role. We cut across this division of roles if companies are given exemptions based on a risk analysis, as this would mean that the government was taking the responsibility upon itself again and that would in fact be a step backwards. It is also an unnecessary step, as it has also become clear meanwhile that the implementation is actually going very well in the majority of Member States. The small businesses in the European Member States have already put their houses in order and they are working with practical workable hygiene codes.

There are two things that we should not forget. First, the general food law that we hope to amend today replaced a whole raft of rules. Even in 2004, Parliament, and certainly the PSE Group, made the case for combating excessive bureaucracy. Small companies can already appeal for flexibility under the present rules. A second point is that a reform is already planned for 2009. If there are serious problems, they can be resolved in 2009, i.e. next year. In a word, our Group is not convinced of the need to implement changes in a great hurry now, without a thorough evaluation.

All the same, we do not want to let the small companies down, which is why we have tabled an amendment that entails leaving the decision to the Member States. Should there be urgent problems in one of the Member States, then that state can decide for itself whether to permit exemptions. That is perfectly in accordance with the Regulation, Mr Schnellhardt, and what is more, it is very pragmatic and also very simple. I am therefore asking you to support Amendment 12.

Marios Matsakis, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I also wish to offer my congratulations to the rapporteur for the hard work he has put into this report.

This proposal aims at reducing the administrative burdens in food-related enterprises. Specifically, the express goal is to exempt micro-enterprises from basic HACCP procedural obligations but without, of course, in any way compromising food hygiene and consumer health safety. This was deemed necessary as companies with less than 10 employees, whose activities consist predominantly of the sale of food directly to the final consumer, are suffering severely under the heavy bureaucratic necessities of HACCP to the extent that, in many cases, bankruptcy becomes an inevitability.

Such an aim is fully in line with our expressed wish to support small businesses in their antagonistic and – in most instances – unfair fight for survival against the large companies. This aim appeared at some stages of our deliberations not to be shared by either the rapporteur or the Council. It became my understanding that their preferred line was – and, it seems, probably still is – to provide exemptions and flexibility equally for all companies, large and small. At first sight and in theory, this may appear proper, but in practice it is grossly unfair to small companies and clearly defeats the purpose of having this piece of legislation in the first place, which is of course to help the micro-enterprises.

Some may argue that this is preferential treatment and unfair competition. They may be right on strictly legalistic and oversimplified theoretical grounds but, in terms of fairness and long-term planning, it is the same as putting a 6-foot champion and a 3-foot child in a boxing ring on exactly equal terms. Our philosophy is that, in some circumstances, the small and weak need some privileged assistance. Otherwise our free internal market will become a deadly pond where the big fish will eat the little ones and then probably eat each other. Our voting philosophy reflects this. I urge you to vote to protect the small businesses of Europe.

Leopold Józef Rutowicz, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Mr President, the report by Mr Schnellhardt contains a number of important amendments to the Commission's proposal. Some of these deal with the differences between Regulation No 852 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning food hygiene, and Regulation No 11. The proposal is for greater flexibility on the part of the relevant bodies where food hygiene is concerned, and for procedures to be simplified. Both these issues are particularly important for small enterprises operating on local and regional markets.

Implementation of the Regulation will require cooperation between supervisory bodies at different levels of the market, constant monitoring of the latter and appropriate support from the Commission, concerning the exchange of best practice for example. Pursuant to adoption of the rapporteur's amendments, this Regulation will have a beneficial effect on the market, and we therefore support it.

Kartika Tamara Liotard, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (NL) Mr President, Europeans are entitled to safe food. That should, I believe, always be the main message in debates like this and the main underlying assumption for European policy. Of course, it is also important to ensure that the citizens are obstructed by as few pointless bureaucratic rules as possible, but the present rules already allow scope for micro-enterprises to be exempted from the most complicated administrative hygiene requirements. Coffee in community centres or stalls selling soft drinks are not under threat and other businesses should simply make sure that their hygiene is good. It is not necessary, therefore, to allow new exemptions apart from the small micro-enterprises, and it is not sensible at all to expand the number of exceptional cases or to make the rules more vague, as the rapporteur seems to want to do on certain points. Just like the consumer organisations, I would advise strongly against this.

Irena Belohorská (NI). – (SK) I want to thank the rapporteur, Mr Schnellhardt, for his report, dealing with two different themes that are subject to different procedures. Since the hygiene of foodstuffs is subject to the codecision procedure, this procedure will inevitably hold back the area of prices and transport conditions, subject only to a consultation process. I agree with the stipulation that food safety requirements in individual Member States must be the same across the board, or at least should not significantly differ from each other. However, here we come to the question of imports to the European Union from third countries where the foodstuffs are full of pesticides. We have a polluted environment, which has a negative impact on human health. Consequently, we must do everything possible to prevent unhealthy foodstuffs from damaging our health.

We have to start testing foodstuffs, their components and the raw materials of animal and plant origin for health hazards, hygienic acceptability and biological values. We have to concentrate on identification or on possible falsification. We have to test for foreign materials in food and to focus on everyday use: for example not just phthalates in toys, which are not used by everyone on a daily basis. Slovak producers are often

criticised with regard to the hygiene of foodstuffs. I must point out, however, that Slovakia has much stricter food standards than the 15 old Member States.

Frieda Brepoels (PPE-DE). – (NL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to thank our rapporteur for his excellent cooperation: at first sight it seems to be a straightforward matter, but when we listen to our fellow Members, we can hear that it certainly is not. It should be obvious to everyone that every business must indeed aim to give the best possible hygiene guarantees, but the way they achieve this aim need not, of course, be the same for all businesses. I think it is crucial that the competent authorities in the different Member States do actually make use of the flexibility that is already provided for in the present Regulation, and exempt certain food companies from what is after all a very complicated HACCP procedure, on condition, of course, that the same standards of hygiene safety can be demonstrated and guaranteed. I believe that it is perfectly possible to do this by observing good hygiene practices based on sectoral guides, such as those that have already been drawn up in some countries.

Nevertheless, I would still like to ask the Commissioner – if he could listen to me for a moment, as I see that he is talking to our rapporteur – whether he can give further clarification on a couple of points. He has said that all food companies are covered by this, regardless of their size. I would still like to hear him say whether he really believes that this report offers more flexibility to a broader range of food companies and not just micro-enterprises.

Secondly, the Commissioner has just said that no additional burden will be imposed on the Member States but there may be additional burdens on businesses. What I would really like to hear, therefore, is whether the proof that the companies have to provide really can be based on the sectoral guides, so that this does not involve additional red tape for companies.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). – (RO) The report outlines the necessity of reducing bureaucracy in the two fields.

Regulation No 11 on eliminating discrimination in terms of tariffs and transport conditions requires carriers to hold a transport document which should contain, among others, the distances, routes and borders passage points. In the field of transportations, the proposal aims at the reduction of certain obligations to provide statistics in the transportations field.

With regard to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, I would like to support the amendment submitted by the European Socialist Group, in which the competent bodies are allowed to exempt economic agents in the foods sector from the implementation of one or several of the imposed measures, provided that these bodies are capable of proving that there is no risk that must be avoided, or that all identified risks are sufficiently and regularly controlled by means of application of the general and special requirements of hygiene of foodstuffs. This refers to bakeries, butcheries, fruit and vegetables shops and, mainly, to market stands.

Holger Krahmer (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, food and hygiene go together; there is absolutely no doubt about that. Everyone has at some time in their lives eaten something that was 'off'. On the other hand, over-caution and excessively stringent regulation do not give us a cornucopia of foods which meet exemplary hygiene standards. A small producer is more likely to close down his shop because he cannot afford to pay the additional workers required to fill in forms rather than bake bread. My host, who serves the bread rolls, does not have to keep a record of whether he has wiped the counter and washed the dishes. After all, if he failed to take these basic precautions, he would have no customers anyway. What is happening is that responsible legislation is sliding into regulatory zeal that does more harm than good. That is why I am completely in favour of easing the administrative burden on companies, especially micro-enterprises, which find it more difficult to cope with this burden than the major corporations.

I would like to see this greater awareness of the impacts on micro-enterprises being carried over into other areas of legislation that we discuss in this House as well, especially environmental and consumer protection.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, we have opted for a system in which every enterprise which produces, processes or sells food must continuously and consistently monitor and document every step in its operations.

While we are sitting here debating whether food hygiene is guaranteed, however, consumer confidence is being undermined by BSE and scandals involving rotten meat, adulterated olive oil, and wine containing glycerine. The fact that more and more GM foods are coming into the EU, even though these are rejected by

70% of the European population, also does very little to boost people's confidence. That is why we must give very careful thought to today's decision, and we must ensure that the health of our citizens is not sacrificed through our kowtowing to the food corporations in advance of the EU-US Summit.

We cannot demand compliance with more stringent provisions from our own producers while allowing imports of foods which are not produced in accordance with the same rigorous standards, given that this after all offers advantages in terms of price and competitiveness. At some point, domestic producers will start demanding exemptions as well, and they would be quite justified in doing so.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Mr President, the purpose of this proposal is to reduce administrative burdens on small enterprises. The proposal came from the Enterprise and Industry DG as part of the Better Regulation initiative. Unfortunately, while I am very sympathetic to the idea of reducing administrative burdens on small businesses, I find this proposal was initially ill-defined (Mr Schnellhardt has amended it extremely well), as it allowed some businesses, such as mobile food outlets and garage forecourt retailers – two categories of businesses that do need to be considered under hygiene rules – to derogate from applying all the hygiene rules.

There is discretion in the hygiene regulation itself to allow businesses who do not need to apply the full HACCP regime to derogate from it with the approval of competent authorities. The problem appears to be that administrations in some Member States are not using their discretionary powers, and in some regions of the EU small sweetshops and even church halls are being asked to apply full HACCP rules.

It is my view that it is the application of the original legislation and not the legislation itself that is the problem.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE). – (HU) I feel that Mr Verheugen's efforts to help SMEs should be supported fully, and I would also like to thank Mr Schnellhardt. Food safety is of crucial importance in the European Union, but we should only regulate and monitor it sensibly and rationally.

People often have the feeling that excessive regulation by the EU helps multinational companies and not SMEs. Mr Verheugen is right that the national monitoring authorities continue to exacerbate the situation, and so small and medium-sized food factories are inspected unnecessarily in Hungary too, and the provisions are complied with excessively and in a pushy way, while they do not dare to take any real action against the multinational companies that have greater lobbying power.

Unfortunately, this report will no longer support the small village abattoirs and bakeries that have been forced to abandon production as a consequence of the incomprehensible over-regulation, but I feel this report should be supported unreservedly.

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Mr President, I support the Commission's proposal. Reducing the bureaucratic burden on small enterprises, small shops and service providers will enable more such entities to survive. It is therefore in the interest of small entrepreneurs, their workers and consumers. Accordingly, providing the criteria of the HACCP system are not infringed, and providing hygiene is maintained in the production of food and services in this area, it is worth helping small bakers, confectioners, butchers, greengrocers and corner cafés, all of which tend to be family businesses. The effect of these legal changes should, however, be subsequently monitored. I congratulate the rapporteur.

Christa Kläß (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, we are not talking about whether we want more hygiene or less hygiene. We are talking about easing burdens and cutting red tape for small and medium-sized enterprises. The question which we need to address once again, then, is this: is HACCP appropriate and necessary in every case and in every company, large or small, and regardless of who is responsible?

In the case of companies which are engaged predominantly in the direct sale of food to the final consumer – such as bakeries, butchers, food stores and market stalls, and indeed, farmers' coffee shops, wine bars and the seasonal wine taverns run by the vineyards, where the owner or manager is known to the customer and is generally available in person – we must undoubtedly apply different criteria from those applicable to a major corporation.

This is about the dismantling of bureaucracy and it is about accountability. I think we should certainly harness the principle of subsidiarity here, but not by demanding the opportunity to introduce significantly different requirements in individual Member States. We must have a level playing field in terms of competition. I therefore support the Commission's proposal and Mr Schnellhardt's report.

Pierre Pribetich (PSE). – (FR) Mr President, no one is denying that we need to establish a procedure based on the principles of hazard analysis and critical control points. Everyone welcomes the fact that at Community level the European Union is proposing inventive legislation on foodstuffs to guarantee the highest possible level of food safety for our fellow citizens. However, we must reduce the amount of pointless bureaucracy, especially for small and micro-enterprises, and ensure efficiency without restricting the objectives relating to foodstuffs.

Do we need to sink into a health and regulatory phobia and drift? Certainly not.

As the representative of Bourgogne-Franche Comté in Parliament, I am familiar with the methods used for the production of all the cheeses in my region by small and micro-enterprises. Bacteria are necessary to make cheese. Reintroduced to pasteurised milk – for certain cheeses – they ensure that these products meet the highest food safety standards. Increasing the volume of regulatory procedures would weaken small and micro-enterprises.

That is why I am calling on Parliament to accept Amendment 12, which facilitates this flexibility. When it comes to respect for cultural diversity and dialogue, I believe that it is essential...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Günter Verheugen, Member of the Commission. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, let me set the record straight once again. This is not about changing the current food hygiene rules. These rules will not be amended, even to a very minor extent, and there will be no exemptions of any kind for anyone. In future, as now, everyone must comply with our food hygiene rules. What we are talking about today is something entirely different. We are talking about whether the extremely complicated and bureaucratic provisions that we currently have in place should be applied to all businesses if, in the first stage of the procedure, they are able to prove that there is absolutely no risk, or that the risk is sufficiently controlled. That is the purpose of this proposal.

In answer to my question: the proposal only concerns those businesses which can demonstrate in the very first stage that there are no risks to food hygiene, or that such risks are sufficiently controlled. This provision is, of course, one which will have a particular impact on small and medium-sized enterprises and especially the micro-enterprises, which will find it easy to furnish the necessary proof. The proposal will not result in an additional burden on the authorities, unless Mr Corbett's additional amendment is adopted, which would mean that at every stage of the procedure, the authorities would have to take action. In that case, we would have a greater administrative burden.

I would ask you to support the rapporteur's proposal. He has indeed improved upon the Commission's original proposal. What we are trying to achieve is quite straightforward: the existing law is currently being applied in a way that does not conform with the legislator's original intention. With this amendment today, we will ensure that the law will be applied as originally intended by the legislator.

The Commission underlines that the amendment to the HACCP regulation does not weaken existing food hygiene requirements. It simply serves to provide greater clarity and, thereby, more effective use of the existing flexibility provisions of the regulation in respect of reporting requirements.

The existing flexibility provisions in respect of reporting requirements do not distinguish between different size classes of companies. However, given the nature of operations of larger food business operators, these provisions are less likely to apply to larger companies. The amendment is, therefore, likely to be particularly beneficial for small and medium sized enterprises. A proposed new recital makes this explicit.

The amendment does not create any additional compliance burdens for competent authorities since the responsibility to demonstrate compliance rests exclusively with food business operators.

The objective of the amendment is to reduce administrative burdens on companies through a more effective uptake of the existing flexibility provisions on reporting.

Horst Schnellhardt, rapporteur. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am very grateful indeed for the various contributions to this debate. I think almost all the contributions have made one thing clear: we have the will to roll back bureaucracy, and we have the will to ease the burden on small and medium-sized companies in Europe when it comes to implementing the HACCP rules.

Now it is up to us to express this will by voting in favour of the right amendments, and that means Amendment 10, which we have agreed with the Commission and representatives of the Council presidency. This amendment states in clear and unequivocal terms what we want to achieve.

In this way, we can proceed in a very straightforward manner, building on the Regulations adopted in 2006. We want to equip the authorities and, indeed, the food companies with a procedure which enables them to react quickly. As I pointed out in my speech earlier today, the difficulties will arise in relation to the licensing of companies up to 2009.

We need to send a clear message here. We want to roll back bureaucracy and we want to maintain hygiene standards. They are not diluted by this proposal. I think that is the message which conveys what Parliament wants.

President. – Congratulations on your excellent work, Mr Schnellhardt.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place at 11 a.m.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Gyula Hegyi (PSE), in writing. – (HU) Inspections by the authorities in Hungary, which fall due in the summer, show that there are often certain hygiene problems with casual traders, fast-food outlets and market stalls. These phenomena are also known in other countries. I agree that we must deconstruct the unnecessary bureaucracy, mainly if the provisions make it impossible for small businesses to work. However, reducing the scope of the legislation cannot mean eroding food safety.

In contrast with other continents, food safety regulation in Europe is at a unique, outstanding level. There may be deficiencies in its implementation, but these problems must not necessarily be solved by weakening regulation. For this reason, we can only grant exemption from the HACCP and hygiene monitoring by the Union in cases where we can be completely sure that we are not causing any harm by doing so. As the Hungarians say, it is better to be frightened than to take fright.

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

President

4. Approval of Minutes of previous sitting

Monica Frassoni (Verts/ALE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Commission triggered the radioactive risk alert system yesterday following an incident at Krško in Slovenia, the details of which remain sketchy. The alert was made public via a procedure that has been described as unusual, but its causes and its consequences are still totally confused and unclear.

We therefore call on the Slovenian Presidency-in-Office and the Commission to maintain the level of transparency urged by the Commission, and to tell the European Parliament and the public what really happened and what is happening now, because a number of rumours are currently circulating which are neither clear nor wholly unambiguous. We therefore demand the necessary clarification from the European authorities.

Roberto Musacchio (GUE/NGL). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like very briefly to endorse my colleague's request. We have here a very serious incident in a reactor which has already experienced problems in the past. Maximum transparency is required, not least because we know that shutting down a reactor and making it safe is no easy matter. As far as my country is concerned, we are just a few dozen kilometres away from Slovenia, which moreover currently holds the presidency.

President. – We have heard from two speakers on this item and I think that is sufficient.

Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, on 1 June, on the basis of information received through the European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) system and guided by the principle of precaution, the Commission released a public statement about the alert message from Slovenia at 17.38 local time. This concerned the loss of coolant that occurred in the primary cooling system of the Krško nuclear power plant in south-west Slovenia.

According to the last information received from the Slovenian authorities, the reactor of the nuclear power plant of Krško was completely shut down on Wednesday, 4 June at 19.30. The relatively small leakage remained within the containment building. The Slovenian authorities have confirmed that there has been no discharge to the environment. The situation can be considered fully under control.

The Commission immediately transmitted this information to all Member States according to the procedure and released a second public statement. The information about the incident came from the European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange system. The ECURIE system requires that Member States promptly notify the Commission and all the Member States potentially affected when they intend to take counter measures if necessary, in order to protect the population against the effects of a radiological or nuclear accident. The European Community needs to immediately forward this notification to all Member States.

All the 27 Member States, as well as Switzerland, have signed the ECURIE agreement. The Commission emphasises that the ECURIE system is an information-sharing system about nuclear incidents, and the Commission considers that a full transparency approach is the most appropriate response in cases of nuclear incidents.

Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I recently obtained radiation measurement data from a radioactivity measuring station in Krško which show that in fact, an astonishing peak in *radiation levels was recorded the day before the alarm was sounded*. There has to be an explanation for that.

President. – With that, we close that particular item. The Commission will take note. We will now proceed with our normal business.

(The Minutes of the previous sitting were approved)

5. Request for waiver of parliamentary immunity: see Minutes

6. Voting time

President. – The next item is voting time.

(For the outcome and other details of the vote: see Minutes)

6.1. Specific measures for agriculture in favour of the smaller Aegean islands (A6-0170/2008, Neil Parish) (vote)

6.2. Draft amending budget 3/2008 (A6-0204/2008, Kyösti Virrankoski/Ville Itälä) (vote)

6.3. Draft amending budget 4/2008 (A6-0203/2008, Kyösti Virrankoski) (vote)

6.4. Contact-point network against corruption (A6-0174/2008, Hubert Pirker) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Hubert Pirker, rapporteur. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, before all of you, as far as possible, vote in favour of this report, I would like to give you some brief information and voice an appeal to the Council which, yet again, is absent. The Member States and the European Union wish to, and must, take more ambitious and effective action against corruption. That is why the European Parliament has endorsed the establishment of a contact-point network against corruption. The lead committee, at least, has voted unanimously in favour of such a move.

The purpose of the network is, firstly, to foster cooperation among the authorities and agencies in the Member States and, secondly, to encourage the exchange of data on effective strategies. However, the Council proposal before us is quite simply too lacking in ambition and is toothless and thus redundant as it stands. Parliament

has therefore tabled a number of very significant amendments, with unanimous support, as I said, being achieved in committee.

Firstly, OLAF, Europol and Eurojust should be integral parts of this network, which is why we are asking for their participation to be mandatory. Secondly, the network should submit an annual report to the European Parliament on its activities, with practical proposals on how to improve the prevention and combating of corruption. Thirdly, the costs of all of the network members should be borne from the Community budget, so as to ensure the independence of the network as a whole.

I therefore urge the Council to incorporate Parliament's proposals and establish the contact-point network swiftly, for this would give us a unique opportunity finally to achieve a joint strategy for the European Union and establish an appropriate mechanism to combat corruption.

6.5. Community system against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (A6-0193/2008, Marie-Hélène Aubert) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Marie-Hélène Aubert, *rapporteur*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, the fisheries sector is experiencing a serious crisis at present, not just because of the increase in the price of diesel, for which sustainable, global proposals must be put forward and not just temporary solutions, but also because of the poor management of fisheries resources, over-fishing by the European fishing fleet and the increase in the number of products of illegal fishing that find their way onto the European market.

This highly lucrative illegal fishing speeds up the deterioration of fish resources and marine ecosystems and destabilises the entire sector, which is feeling the full force of this unfair competition.

The proposal by the European Commission and this report are thus essential elements in the implementation of sustainable, responsible fishing that enables European fishermen to earn a living.

This report was adopted unanimously in the Committee on Fisheries. Our aim today is to send a strong signal to the Council, to the most closely involved Member States, which must today take full responsibility and implement the necessary rapid, effective measures. I am counting on your determination.

6.6. Protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (A6-0183/2008, Duarte Freitas) (vote)

6.7. Implementing trade policy through efficient import and export rules and procedures (A6-0184/2008, Jean-Pierre Audy) (vote)

6.8. Mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund (A6-0205/2008, Reimer Böge) (vote)

6.9. International carriage of passengers by coach and bus (recast) (A6-0037/2008, Mathieu Grosch) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Hannes Swoboda (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, I just wanted to thank Mr Grosch and the members of the Committee on Transport and Tourism for enabling us to postpone this item until today. As we see, we have achieved a broad consensus in favour.

President. – Well, we have not voted yet, but I hope that you are right.

Mathieu Grosch, *rapporteur*. – (DE) Mr President, we have already held the debate on this item in Strasbourg, so I do not need to discuss it further today. For the so-called 12-day trips, we have achieved an excellent cross-party compromise, also with the submission of the outcomes of the social partners' negotiations. Indeed, we could say that we have improved upon the social partners' compromise here in the House. I hope that we will thus be able to conclude this matter very successfully with broad support.

May I also point out that the English text of Amendment 31 should be put to the vote, as I have noticed that a very important word has been omitted from the French and German texts.

President. – The various language versions will be checked.

6.10. Hygiene of foodstuffs (A6-0143/2008, Horst Schnellhardt) (vote)

6.11. Prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyreostatic action and of beta agonists (A6-0067/2008, Karin Scheele) (vote)

6.12. Generalised tariff preferences for the period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011 (A6-0200/2008, Helmuth Markov) (vote)

6.13. Deterioration of the situation in Georgia (vote)

– *Before the vote on paragraph 2:*

Marie Anne Isler Béguin (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in order to reflect the reality of the situation in Georgia, I would like to add a phrase after ‘South Ossetia and Abkhazia’. I will read it to you in poor English, for which I apologise.

‘Deplores, in this regard, the decision taken by the Russian Ministry of Defence on 31 May 2008 to send its forces to Abkhazia to restore the rail and road infrastructure in the breakaway region in accordance with the presidential decree’.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

6.14. 2006 Annual report on the CFSP (A6-0189/2008, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski) (vote)

6.15. Annual report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy and ESDP (A6-0186/2008, Helmut Kuhne) (vote)

6.16. EU-United States Summit (vote)

– *Before the vote on Amendment 5:*

Jan Marinus Wiersma (PSE). – Mr President, we would like to make the amendment somewhat more balanced by adding at the end of this amendment: ‘stresses at the same time the necessity to improve the procedures relating to the EU’s black list’.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

6.17. The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (vote)

– *Before the vote on paragraph 8:*

Michael Gahler (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, there is another amendment before that, namely Amendment 1.

The oral amendment is an addition. If I may continue in English, the amendment states:

‘welcomes the Commission proposal that the EU Co-Presidency should be held by the competent EU institutions’, and then the original text continues.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

– *Before the vote on Amendment 2:*

Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, pursuant to Rule 150(5), on behalf of the Green Group I would like to request a roll-call vote for Amendment 2.

– Before the vote on paragraph 10:

Michael Gahler (PPE-DE). – The new text of paragraph 10 should read as follows: ‘Considers that the new proposed secretariat should be integrated in the Commission services, could comprise officials seconded from ...’. Then the original text continues.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

6.18. The future for young farmers under the ongoing reform of the CAP (A6-0182/2008, Donato Tommaso Veraldi) (vote)

6.19. The work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2007 (A6-0175/2008, Alain Hutchinson) (vote)

6.20. Competition: Sector inquiry on retail banking (A6-0185/2008, Gianni Pittella) (vote)

6.21. Retail Financial Services in the Single Market (A6-0187/2008, Othmar Karas) (vote)

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Romana Jordan Cizelj (PPE-DE). – (SL) I would like to comment on the remarks made at the beginning of voting when fellow members attempted to use the unplanned event at the Krško nuclear power station as an illustration of the unsafe performance of nuclear power plants. I should point out that the event was indeed unplanned, that it involved a component failure, that the plant was not shut down but rather had its operations safely suspended, and that repairs on it are under way. The operation of the power station is transparent and fellow members can find information on it on the website of the country’s nuclear safety administration. I should also add that by all performance indicators the Krško nuclear power station is one of the safest nuclear power plants in the world.

7. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

8. Membership of political groups: see Minutes

IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

Vice-President

9. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

- Motion for a resolution: Deterioration of the situation in Georgia (RC-B6-0278/2008)

Tunne Kelam (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I would like to put on record that, if we call for the sending of an ESDP border mission to Georgia, then we should also consider in the near future sending an EU police mission to Georgia.

Sylwester Chruszcz (NI). – (PL) Mr President, I cannot support today’s resolution on Georgia because I consider it to be unduly biased. The situation in the Caucasus is more complex than the text of the resolution now before us suggests. I should like to remind the House that Georgia has Stalin to thank for its present borders. The latter are the result of the policy Stalin, who was himself a native of Georgia, conducted in the

1920s and 1930s. In addition, the policy conducted by the Georgians during the 1990s did a lot to make the authorities in Suckhumi wish to break with Georgia. Furthermore, I cannot understand why the same Members who only recently so enthusiastically supported the independence of Serbian Kosovo are now denying two historical nations in the Caucasus the right to self-determination. I do, however, support the international efforts to promote dialogue and the peace process in the Caucasus.

- Motion for a resolution: EU-United States Summit (RC-B6-0277/2008)

Tunne Kelam (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I would like to support the original amendment by my colleague, James Elles, who has proposed a new paragraph which declares that the EU recognises the substantial contribution to the protection of the EU from long-range ballistic missiles to be provided by the planned deployment of the European-based US missile defence assets.

Frank Vanhecke (NI). – (NL) Mr President, the resolution on the EU-US Summit does, of course, cover a very large number of different topics. A number of positions from this resolution are, for me, completely unacceptable, while others are extremely valuable. I had no choice, therefore, but to abstain.

What I would like to add here, however, is that this resolution should, in the first place, have included a clear passage pointing out to the United States that it should not interfere with the potential expansion of the European Union. The way in which the United States regularly intervenes to champion the unacceptable Turkish case is, in my view, unacceptable interference in a European affair. The United States must realise that there is a great difference between the interests of NATO on the one hand, and the interests of the European Union and the people of Europe on the other hand. Turkey cannot join the European Union because it is not a European country. As far as this is concerned, we are asking for no more and no less than respect on the part of the United States.

Mario Borghezio (UEN). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am taking the subject of compensation for prisoners at Guantánamo, addressed in this report, as an opportunity to recall that there is another case of civilian and military prisoners still to be resolved: it involves a Member State, indeed a founder member of the European Union.

Yesterday, Italy's supreme Court of Appeal found in favour of the Italian military and civilian detainees who were seeking compensation for the work they performed in prison camps during the Second World War. This is an unresolved moral issue, which I have attempted to draw to the attention of the President of this House on several occasions. I have also raised it with Chancellor Merkel in this House: she stated in her personal capacity that she agreed on the need to settle the matter.

Now that the attempts of the Federal Republic of Germany to delay the decision in court have finally been thwarted, one wonders whether – more than sixty years after the end of the war – Germany will now decide to compensate Italy's military detainees.

- Report: Donato Tommaso Veraldi (A6-0182/2008)

Neil Parish (PPE-DE). – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Veraldi very much for his report on young farmers. I think that we live in a world now where food production is becoming very important again and we have to look to the future. One of the ways of looking to the future of agriculture is through young farmers.

With the reform of the common agricultural policy, we now have the health check to look particularly at things which will help young farmers, and that is reduction in bureaucracy and abolishing quotas so that young farmers can go into milk production, which is one of the ways that they have always got into farming.

We also have to look a little bit further towards some sort of venture capital schemes, because one of the problems facing young farmers is they have very little collateral when they want to start farming. Very often banks will not give them the necessary cash to start, so I think we have to look forward to that as well. I believe that young farmers can link into food production, they can link into niche markets, and they can produce the type of food in the regions that we want and really link into the market place. I welcome the report and I look forward to supporting young farmers.

Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE). – (FR) Mr President, I voted in favour of this report because if there is no acceptable future for young farmers, there will be no future for European agriculture. For many reasons relating to food safety, the supply of quality products, the environment, and preserving our beautiful mountainous landscapes

and vineyards, we need to implement positive actions to encourage young people to work in the agricultural sector, to take over the family business.

However, above all I would like to express my satisfaction that, on the basis of my initiative in the Committee on Agriculture, the European Parliament has just added an amendment to draw specific attention to the importance of providing information about the status of partners assisting farmers. I would like to point out in this regard that in 1997 – more than 10 years ago – this Parliament adopted by a vast majority my report on the status of assisting spouses in the agricultural sector. In our resolution, we stressed in particular that Member States should ensure that all assisting spouses in the agricultural sector are eligible for insurance cover for retirement pensions. The Commission did not follow this through. We have such a system in my country: compulsory insurance. That example should be followed and we need a framework directive to achieve that.

Jörg Leichtfried (PSE). – (DE) Mr President, I wish to point out that I abstained in the vote on this report, but not because I disagree with the view that young farmers need support. I strongly believe that they do indeed require support, for young farmers undoubtedly face greater problems than many other farmers.

The reason why I abstained had to do with the vote on paragraph 4, which makes reference to the situation of young farmers in the so-called new Member States. In my view, now that almost an entire legislative term has elapsed, it is surely time to drop the reference to the so-called 'new' Member States and treat them as full Member States of equal value, for in my opinion, they are now well-established as such.

- Report: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (A6-0189/2008)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Mr President, since the end of the Second World War we have worked hard to achieve the period of peace and stability we now enjoy. Even so, we are today threatened by terrorism, regional conflicts and international crime. The European Union's role in the contemporary world should be to spread peace, democracy, and freedom across the globe. The Union should also ensure stability, and combat humanitarian disasters and mass violations of human rights. That is the vision enshrined in the European common foreign and security policy. We are jointly responsible for ensuring security at global level.

Security now involves more than resolving international conflicts and protecting borders. A wider interpretation of security is needed. We must place greater emphasis on the types of security that are not covered by the European common foreign and security policy, namely food security and energy security.

It ought to be borne in mind that the desired objective can only be achieved through cooperation and the exchange of best practice. Coordinated action is essential both at Member State level and between the various European institutions. There must also be collaboration with NATO and cooperation with other regional and global organisations.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A6-0205/2008)

Margaritis Schinas (PPE-DE). – (EL) Mr President, I am asking to speak because we have just voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of making EUR 90 million available from the EU's Solidarity Fund to Greece in the wake of last summer's disastrous forest fires.

European public opinion was shocked by last summer's disaster. Today's European Parliament decision is a gesture of real solidarity with the regions and citizens who were severely affected last August.

Let me thank all my fellow Members in the Committee on Budgets, and you as well, ladies and gentlemen, for the most interesting and rapid work we have accomplished and for the very successful hearing we have organised. Allow me to make one final point, Mr President: we are perhaps the only parliament in the world which manages to stifle good news. Today we have an important decision on the allocation of money to Greek citizens. For technical rather than political reasons, we have, unfortunately, not been able to make the decision by means of a debate. I regret this, but the effectiveness of the decision is more important than anything.

- Report: Donato Tommaso Veraldi (A6-0182/2008)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Mr President, we are facing a tremendous challenge in terms of how to encourage young people to remain in rural areas. There is also a shortage of people willing to go into farming, and to take on the farms run by their parents. Young farmers who are starting out come up

against many difficulties. The latter include a shortage of suitable land, high prices, production limits, lack of start-up capital for investment, expensive loans and strict agri-environmental requirements.

Almost one third of Polish farmers are young people under the age of 40. As a group, they are open to change, technological progress and innovation. Young farmers are just like other entrepreneurs. They are enthusiastic and are not afraid of new challenges. They are also crucial to our future, because the food security of Europe and of the world depends on them. They need help to become better qualified, through vocational training and advice. In addition, efforts should be made to improve the financial conditions for running a business in a rural area, to eliminate the differences in the pace of development of technical and social infrastructure between rural areas and towns. Above all else, stable conditions for development must be ensured.

Written explanations of vote

- Report: Neil Parish (A6-0170/2008)

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Following the entry into force of Regulation (EC) No 1405/2006 laying down specific measures for agriculture in favour of the smaller Aegean islands, two lines of support (aid for supply and aid for local production) were set up.

Certain technical aspects must, however, be corrected in order to fully apply this Regulation and these two lines of support, which is why I support the Commission proposal and the Parish report.

- Report: Kyösti Virrankoski (A6-0204/2008)

Richard James Ashworth (PPE-DE), in writing. – We note that the PDAB 3 contains positive measures, such as: to authorise the total figure of €849m owed by Microsoft for abusing their market position; to vote through the funds under the EUSF for Greece and Slovenia; to fully fund the provision of bluetongue vaccine to combat the disease and to provide 50% of the cost of implementation per Member State and provide savings on salaries and pensions for the Institution's staff.

However, we also note that the PDAB contains undesirable measures such as the salary increase for the Director of the Gender Institute as well as changes to the establishment plan of the European Economic and Social Committee.

We welcome the criticism of the previous two measures in the Virrankoski report and, while we are against the decision to adopt the PDAB 3 unamended, accept that the raft of positive measures outlined must be voted through this session.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the joint report by my Finnish colleagues Kyösti Virrankoski and Ville Itälä on the third draft amending budget of the European Union for 2008.

It relates mainly to: the budgeting of the revenue accruing from the Microsoft case (fine and interest totalling EUR 849 200 000); the budgeting of savings arising from the smaller than estimated increase for salaries and pensions of officials in 2007; the reinforcement of the emergency fund for veterinary measures due to the bluetongue crisis (EUR 130 million in commitment appropriations, and EUR 63 950 000 in payment appropriations); the creation of budgetary items to accommodate subsidies for four Joint Undertakings: Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), Clean Sky, ARTEMIS (embedded computing systems) and ENIAC (European Technology Platform on Nanoelectronics), totalling EUR 257.5 million in commitment appropriations and EUR 194.6 million in payment appropriations from the Seventh Framework Programme for Research; and the mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund for an amount of EUR 98 million (forest fires in Greece and floods in Slovenia).

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) This draft amending budget covers, among other items, mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund in favour of Greece and Slovenia. The aim is to help compensate for the damage caused by the forest fires and flooding which seriously affected the populations of these two countries in 2007.

The draft also aims to reinforce the emergency fund for veterinary measures due to the bluetongue crisis which has affected several Member States, including Portugal. Accordingly, in order to finance 100% of the cost of supply of the vaccine and 50% of the costs incurred in carrying out the vaccination in nine Member States, it is planned to include in the Community budget EUR 130 million in commitments and EUR 63.95 million in payments.

However, we would highlight the inclusion of over EUR 257 million in commitments and EUR 194 million in payments for the creation of new public-private partnerships in the context of the Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities. These partnerships cover Innovative Medicines (IMI), 'Clean Sky', European Technology Platform on Nanoelectronics and ARTEMIS for Embedded Computing Systems. At the very least, these initiatives need a public development strategy and public investment that are not dependent on private capital interests.

- Report: Kyösti Virrankoski (A6-0203/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my Finnish colleague Kyösti Virrankoski on the fourth draft amending budget of the European Parliament for 2008. It relates solely to the inclusion in the 2008 budget of the surplus of the 2007 financial year, i.e. EUR 1 528 833 290.

For 2007 the difference between the revenue received (EUR 117.4 billion) and the payments made (EUR 112.9 billion) shows a surplus of EUR 4.5 billion, from which must be subtracted the payment appropriations carried over to 2008, i.e. EUR 3.1 billion. To this surplus of EUR 1.4 billion the cancelled EUR 0.2 billion of the appropriations carried over from 2006 to 2007 must be added and the negative balance of monetary exchange of EUR 0.1 billion must be subtracted, giving the 2007 surplus of EUR 1.5 billion. This surplus is primarily due to an under-spending in expenditure of just under EUR 1.6 billion.

I am sorry that, instead of being automatically refunded to the Member States, there was no political debate on allocating this surplus, for example, to financing investment in the trans-European transport networks. I still remember the difficulties we encountered when trying to find some EUR 3.5 billion to finance the excellent Galileo project.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The aim of this amending budget is to include the surplus from the budget year 2007 in the Community budget for 2008. This surplus is over EUR 1.528 billion and is due mainly, *inter alia*, to the delay in approving operational programmes of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to be transferred to the various Member States.

The draft also includes amounts not used in 2007 under the EU's common foreign and security policy, such as the 'police mission' to Afghanistan and the so-called 'civil mission' to Kosovo. As regards the situation in Kosovo, we would highlight the illegal and illegitimate military/'civil' operation by the US-NATO-EU – in other words, interference, destabilisation, aggression, occupation and unilateral declaration of independence of the Serbian province of Kosovo, with total disregard for international law – and the current 'stalemate in negotiations on the transfer of responsibilities from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to EULEX' (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo) in the United Nations.

Finally, I want to point out that the 'surplus' from 2007 will reduce the Member States' contributions to the Community budget, in particular as follows: EUR 300 million less for Germany, EUR 258 million less for the United Kingdom and EUR 233 million less for France. This is what is known as 'winning every which way'...

Bogusław Liberadzki (PSE), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, I voted in favour of adoption of the report on the draft amending budget of the European Union No 4/2008 for the financial year 2008 (9904/2008 – C6-0207/2008 – 2008/2094(BUD)). The report by Mr Virrankoski is thorough and to the point.

I agree with the rapporteur's stance that the balance of each year's budget should be entered in the budget for the subsequent financial year as revenue or expenditure. In the case before us it would be the budget for 2008. This should be done through an amending budget to be submitted to the Commission.

- Report: Hubert Pirker (A6-0174/2008)

Philip Bradbourn (PPE-DE), in writing. – Conservatives abstained on this report as it forms part of the European objective to develop an area for freedom, security and justice - instead preferring an intergovernmental approach.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The European Union strategy on the prevention and control of organised crime indicates the need to develop a comprehensive EU policy against corruption in which all the relevant players must actively participate.

Effective prevention and combating of corruption in Europe therefore depend on the existence of effective and efficient cooperation between the respective authorities and services of the Member States, identifying opportunities, sharing good practices and developing high professional standards.

For this reason I support the idea of formally establishing an anti-corruption network with contact points in the Member States, the activities of which must be fully associated (within the respective competencies) with other organisations and agencies playing a fundamental role in this fight, as is the case with OLAF (European Anti-Fraud Office), Europol and Eurojust.

I also support the amendments tabled by the rapporteur, Hubert Pirker, in particular the amendment on the need for transparency and information in relation to the activities and recommendations of this network, which must result in the presentation of an annual report to the Commission and the European Parliament.

Titus Corlăţean (PSE), in writing. – (RO) I welcome the Council's decision regarding the contact points network against corruption, aimed at improving cooperation between the authorities fighting against corruption in the EU.

European cooperation is an essential element in the fight against corruption, especially in the new Member States, where non-governmental organizations and European experts underline the continuing existence of some significant deficiencies, including those within the operation of the legal system.

The last assessment report of GRECO (The States' Group against Corruption) of the Council of Europe with regard to Romania, outlines, for the year 2007, that our country has implemented only 40% of the anti-corruption measures advised by the European institutions. On this occasion, I invite the Romanian rightist government to assume in public the failure of its programmes in the fight against corruption.

I consider that the fight against corruption should be a major objective of the European Union in order to provide its citizens a space of freedom, security and justice. The European Commission (by means of OLAF), Europol and Eurojust should be part of this network.

Unfortunately, in several of the new EU Member States, including Romania, the fight against corruption is rather used as an election promise and as a political weapon directed against the opposition political parties.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The establishment of a 'network of contact points' in a framework of cooperation between the various Member States, with the aim of sharing experiences and good practices, could form another asset in the fight against corruption in each country.

According to the EC Treaty, the Community and the Member States are responsible for adopting measures to combat fraud and protect the Community's financial interests. At Community level there is, for example, a need to guarantee more autonomy and resources for the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

However, we dislike the fact that this measure is regarded as an embryo and will be used to promote or will be part of the more general objective of developing the so-called 'area of freedom, security and justice', in line with the 2005 Hague Programme, in particular by bringing justice and home affairs within the Community system.

This communitisation process is encouraged and ensured by the Treaty now known as the 'Lisbon' Treaty, by removing from the Member States' sovereignty (from their parliaments and other national institutions) those responsibilities which are at the heart of this sovereignty.

We therefore repeat our reservations about the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor, which is a stage in the process of establishing a future 'European Public Prosecutor's Office' based around Europol, Eurojust and OLAF.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) Corruption is a widespread problem affecting every sector of our society, whether it be the economy, trade unions or the administration. After cases of corruption at Siemens that ran into billions, the newspapers are now full of articles about the scandal in the Polish football league. Even the EU hits the headlines again and again, and certainly not in a positive way, with accusations of corruption, mismanagement, mis-spending and so on.

The fact that the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is there to pool the anti-corruption efforts of all the Council of Europe members is therefore welcome. We must hope that the right lessons will be learned. It is not only Bulgaria which must improve its record on combating corruption; the EU must put its own

house in order as well. We still have far too lax management of EU funds, poor controls, lengthy procedures and virtually no way of recouping EU funding that is paid out incorrectly.

- Report: Marie-Hélène Aubert (A6-0193/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my French colleague Marie-Hélène Aubert, which proposes amending, via the consultation procedure, the proposal for a Council regulation establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. It has become urgent to tackle this issue because illegal fishing is a serious problem all over the world.

I unreservedly support this initiative, which, as the rapporteur points out, was proposed by the European Parliament in February 2007. I welcome the clarification that access to ports of Member States, the provision of port services, and the conduct of landing, transshipment or on-board processing operations in such ports must be prohibited for third-country fishing vessels except, of course, in cases of distress or *force majeure*.

As long as it is not too complex, I am in favour of catch certificates to ensure the traceability of fisheries products.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is currently one of the main problems facing the management of marine resources. It threatens the sustainability of resources and marine biodiversity and has serious economic consequences for fishermen operating within the law.

As the biggest consumer and importer of fish products, the European Community has particular responsibility in the fight against illegal fishing, in the adoption of solutions preventing these practices from continuing and in the pressure which must be brought to bear on the international community to adopt similar measures.

The European Parliament report contains 65 proposed amendments which complement the Commission proposal and go against national interests.

It should be noted that the proposal defines a system applicable to all IUU fishing activities or associated activities, carried out on Community territory or in waters under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of Member States, which were fully debated and defended during the period of the Portuguese Presidency.

This document therefore merits my support.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The sustainability of fish stocks is fundamental to guaranteeing the long-term existence of fishing activity and the socioeconomic viability of the fishing sector.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing threatens this sustainability and calls into question the viability of the sector and fishing communities dependent on it.

As such, it is vital that measures are adopted to reinforce the fight against these illegal activities, in particular by reinforcing control mechanisms in each Member State.

This proposal, which complements measures already laid down within the common fisheries policy, introduces various provisions which aim to curb these practices carried out by vessels flying the flag of a Member State or by vessels from third countries.

The measures proposed therefore include greater control by the Member States at their ports, the requirement for a certificate issued by the flag State indicating that the catch is legal and the creation of a list of vessels involved in IUU fishing.

However, we would reiterate that any future harmonisation of these proposals with a future revision of the Community legislation on control must safeguard the competences of the Member States, particularly for inspections. We would also reiterate that all the issues relating to penalties come under the competence of each Member State.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I welcome my colleague Ms Aubert's report on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. It is in the interests of all fishing communities that IUU is tackled and the EU has a vital role to play in this. Nevertheless, the management of fisheries resources should be the responsibility of the fishing nations and the EU must work towards the dismantling of the CFP.

Bogusław Liberadzki (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of adoption of the report by Mrs Aubert on the proposal for a Council regulation establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (COM(2007)0602 – C6-0454/2007 – 2007/0223(CNS)).

This is a sound report that provides an accurate picture of the problem of illegal fishing, which represents a real threat to the survival of marine resources. It therefore seems essential to establish a Community system to combat the aforementioned practice.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – Mrs Aubert's report on the Community system against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a report that I generally support. I agree with a number of the rapporteur's proposals. To see that Member States provide certification of the legality of the fish that their boats catch, for example, appears fair. Europe-wide action is required to counter irregular fishing practices and my vote reflects these views.

Jean-Claude Martinez (NI), in writing. – (FR) Fishermen in France, Spain and Italy are telling us of their legitimate revolt, their right to make a living, their indignation. Small farmers are saying the same.

For a year the price of fuel has been stifling our fishermen economically. This comes on top of the bureaucratic stifling they are experiencing as a result of the quotas, penalties, monitoring and inspections that are transforming the freedom of the high seas into a liquid Soviet Union.

In the light of the tragedy affecting this profession, what are we proposing to these men, these regions, these villages, these local economies? Nothing! Except vague transitional aid, like palliative care.

What is worse, on the day that the Mediterranean fishermen are in Brussels to demand their right to live, here we are discussing additional criminal penalties to combat illegal fishing.

Fishermen are even refused support in terms of VAT and excise duty.

The solution is a European debt compensation fund for fishermen to ensure that they do not have to put up with the inequality in relation to public burdens, generated by the import policy and the domination of the distribution giants.

James Nicholson (PPE-DE), in writing. – Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a growing problem which requires enhanced cooperation between the EU and the international community if it is to be efficiently tackled.

To a large extent this proposal by the Commission reflects recommendations made by the Fisheries Committee, specifically Ms Aubert's first report dealing with IUU. I fully support the main elements of the proposal which include a ban on the importation of IUU fish and the implementation of port controls which would prohibit access of third country vessels suspected of illegal fishing.

Until recently, the EU has focused solely on the regulation of its own fishermen, concentrating on making sure that they do not flout EU laws while the practice of IUU was essentially ignored. It is encouraging to see that now real efforts are being made by Parliament and the Commission to address this problem.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am voting in favour of the report tabled by our colleague Marie-Hélène Aubert on a Community system to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Illegal fishing represents one of the worst threats to the sustainability of fish stocks and marine biodiversity.

The Commission's proposal is important in enabling the European Union to play a proper leading role within an ever more complex and interconnected sector. To this end, I think it desirable that the proposal should apply not only to third-country fishing vessels but also to those flying the Community flag, in order to adopt non-discriminatory measures and introduce a common policy within the European Union.

There can be no disputing the importance of a certification system to ensure traceability and make it possible to have a label guaranteeing the fish product, in parallel with harmonised, dissuasive sanctions and a system of checks and inspections to minimise illegal fishing activity.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – I would like to support the Aubert report and condemn illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), in writing. – (PL) Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, known as IUU, represents a serious problem. In its effort to deal with the problem actively and effectively, the European Union should benefit from the experience of countries which, although they are not Members of the Union, nonetheless have much stricter provisions aimed at combating illegal fishing. The countries concerned include Norway, Iceland and Canada. First and foremost, we must concentrate on dealing with fisheries infringements within the Union. To date, this has been a major problem. The next step should involve supporting developing countries wishing to adopt the programme to counter IUU. Unfortunately, those developing countries do not have sufficient financial resources for the purpose.

- Report: Duarte Freitas (A6-0183/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my esteemed Portuguese colleague Duarte Freitas, which, in accordance with the consultation procedure, proposes amendments to the proposal for a Council regulation on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from the adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears. This draft regulation implements the United Nations recommendations of 2006 and applies to EU vessels operating in the high seas in areas that are not regulated by a regional fisheries organisation and thus require flag state regulation. Between doing nothing and banning everything, I support the third alternative proposed by the European Union: it involves strictly regulating bottom trawling by defining the conservation and management measures adopted by the regional fisheries organisations (RFOs) and laying down the discipline that flag states must apply in respect of their vessels when these operate in areas of the high seas not regulated by an RFO.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Some marine ecosystems (such as reefs, seamounts, hydrothermal vents, cold water corals or cold water sponge beds) are, by their very nature, vulnerable to the use of certain fishing gear.

This proposal aims to protect these ecosystems in the high seas, particularly in areas not regulated by a regional fisheries management organisation.

While fundamentally agreeing with the proposal presented and with the report adopted, we would, however, reiterate that certain aspects of the proposal should be clarified. For example, as regards the definition of 'vulnerable marine ecosystem', the report highlights the need to wait for an FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) definition according to the 'best scientific information available', bearing in mind the lack of in-depth scientific knowledge of these ecosystems. In addition, we would also highlight the need to distinguish between the consequences of using different gear, by carrying out scientific fishing research to determine their potential impacts on stocks and the seabed.

Finally, we also feel it is appropriate to reiterate that the issues of inspections or observation missions on fishing vessels come under the competence of each Member State, particularly as new federal levels to the common fisheries policy have been announced.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The Freitas report relates to vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas. The high seas fall outwith the responsibility of any nations or fisheries organisations and fishing activities have been largely unregulated. It is appropriate that the EU takes action in this area, given the international nature of the fisheries.

This distinguishes the high seas from coastal waters, where the most appropriate control bodies are in the fishing nations themselves, not the EU institutions.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FI) The EU's Maritime Policy is one of the main initiatives for which the current Commission will be remembered in a good light. This proposal for a Council regulation on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from the adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears is a necessary addition to the EU's strategy.

When a halt to biodiversity loss was made an objective at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the year 2010 was set as the deadline. Now, to our regret, we have to say that that aim is not going to be achieved in two years' time. Although environmental targets have been at the top of the world's political agenda for more than twenty years now, many factors still threaten maritime biodiversity. Scientific research has shown that, in spite of the high yields associated with deep sea fishing, poorly organised fishing practices can lead to the destruction of certain species in less than 10 years.

We need to remember that, although such new approaches as these applied in the fishing sector are necessary, woefully little is known about the recovery of deep sea fish species, and all in all the threats to the deep sea ecosystems are much greater. This proposal for a regulation on the fishing industry is nevertheless a clear and necessary one.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – The protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems is essential in order that future generations can enjoy the marine environment.

Margie Sudre (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) With its vote the European Parliament is putting in place strict principles to regulate the activities of Community vessels using bottom fishing gears in the high seas, in zones not regulated by regional fisheries organisations.

Conforming to the recommendations of the United Nations General Assembly, the spearhead in this area, the Members are putting an end to the legal vacuum that allowed the irreparable destruction of our marine ecosystems to take place. I am pleased that the Members of the European Parliament have recognised that the deep-sea ecosystems are an important source of marine biodiversity and that the shift in the fishing effort towards these habitats risked destroying our heritage.

The ecological conscience of the Members of the European Parliament does not seek to make the already difficult work of our fishermen even more complex, nor to increase the bureaucratic pressure. From now on, fishing activities in these specific areas will require a permit and be subject to a prior assessment, which will be carried out by the Member State, to ensure that they will not cause any significant damage. The precautionary principle also comes into play here.

Preservation of marine biodiversity will only be guaranteed if it is integrated vertically into the other Community policies, notably the EU's future maritime policy.

- Report: Jean-Pierre Audy (A6-0184/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, I welcome the Commission's objectives of simplifying, stabilising and clarifying trade rules and procedures. Trade is a key instrument in the current international scenario, serving as a means both of improving the efficiency of international markets and ensuring social and cultural growth for the nations concerned.

Trade agreements between countries can guarantee political stability and lay solid foundations for reasonably durable diplomatic agreements. They are therefore increasingly becoming the main factors in a world ever more dominated by economic relations which, as well as influencing the flow of cultural exchanges between peoples, help to avoid military confrontation and maintain peace.

Trade therefore represents an extremely important vector of dialogue and an opportunity for economic and social development. Making trade less rigid means making the economic system more efficient. Given the significance of the matter in hand, I hope that this House will shoulder its share of responsibility for achieving these objectives.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Audy's report calls for the harmonisation of import and export procedures with a view to ensuring the smooth application of the European Union's trade policy and, above all, consistent application at all the entry points to the EU in order to make life easier for businesses. That might seem logical because we have been part of a customs union for more than 40 years.

However, Mr Audy wants the procedures to be completely harmonised and entrusted to a single European customs service.

The customs authorities are responsible for monitoring the movements of goods and ensuring that they comply with the standards laid down (product safety, consumer protection, health, environment, etc.). They also have a fiscal function: they apply appropriate customs duties, of course, but they also deal with VAT, which, with all due respect, is still a national tax. Finally, or perhaps above all, they have a security role to play and they participate in the fight against trafficking of all kinds, notably drug trafficking, in close cooperation with the police services.

It is no surprise that the rapporteur gives priority to the first function, in the name of the virtues of international trade, and underestimates the other two. That is why we voted against this report.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I support the recommendations outlined in Jean-Pierre Audy's report 'Implementing trade policy through efficient import and export rules and procedures.' I feel it to be a well balanced report that rightly looks ahead at EC customs law after the Lisbon Treaty and the US '100% scanning law'.

Indeed, I share the rapporteur's view that a common approach to the EC customs system would address the inherent difficulties of Member States having responsibility for customs implementation. I voted in favour of the report.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for the report regarding the efficient import and export regulations and procedures in the sector of trade policy, which ensure greater efficiency in the customs field, as well as the cooperation among the European customs agencies.

The European Union market is confronted with the counterfeiting and piracy phenomenon. The losses incurred by the violation of intellectual property rights amounted to EURO 62 million in Romania in 2007, according to the analysis conducted by the International Alliance of Intellectual Property. The adoption of this report by the European Parliament and the development of the plan for fighting counterfeiting and piracy on a European level will reduce this loss.

The report welcomes the consensus reached by the Member States and the Commission with regard to the negotiation mandate of an international agreement against counterfeiting (The Commercial Agreement against Counterfeit), as this agreement is of major importance for the EU trade strategy.

As the European regulations for consumers' protection, mainly the ones concerning health and the safety, are applied for all products within the EU market, the Commission and the Member States are asked to take all the necessary measures so as to effectively monitor a high level of protection for consumers.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), in writing. – (PL) Over 2 billion tonnes of goods pass through the Union's air and sea ports every year. The customs services deal with in excess of 100 million customs declarations. By so doing, they are protecting the health and safety of European Union citizens.

The customs services are also involved in practices connected with counterfeiting goods. This is a growing and increasingly dangerous phenomenon concerning not only fashionable luxury goods but also medicines, toothpaste and skincare products. The customs services are seizing counterfeit spare parts for motor vehicles, such as braking systems. Counterfeit sunglasses can cause damage to the wearer's eyesight. Combating these practices and putting a stop to them will contribute to better health protection and improved security for the citizens.

The customs authorities introduced appropriate security checks to protect the internal market. Working in close cooperation with important trading partners at international level, they protect international freight transport against the smuggling of goods linked to terrorist activity.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A6-0205/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my esteemed German colleague Reimer Böge, which proposes approving as it stands the Commission proposal to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund to assist Slovenia and Greece, which in 2007 were affected by floods and forest fires respectively, to the tune of around EUR 98 million, which should be the subject of an amended budget adopted in parallel. In order to avoid any delay in the provision of financial assistance in the case of disasters, I support the recommendation in the report that the Commission propose amending budgets aimed solely at mobilising this Fund, use of which must not exceed EUR 1 billion per year under the current Interinstitutional Agreement.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The severe forest fires that devastated Greece in the summer of 2007 and the serious flooding in Slovenia in September 2007 justify this (second) mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund for 2007.

This Fund has an annual ceiling of EUR 1 billion, of which around EUR 163 million has already been used at the request of the United Kingdom following the floods that hit that country in 2007. An amount of around EUR 837 million is therefore still available.

The proposal adopted today provides for the allocation of nearly EUR 90 million to Greece and around EUR 8 million to Slovenia. This is peanuts compared with the damage suffered by the populations of these two countries which, in the case of Greece, exceeds EUR 2 billion.

However, there is at least one question that must be answered: how is it possible that it is only now, nearly one year after the disasters suffered by these populations, that EU funding is being made available? Clearly there is something wrong here...

We would point out that we have presented proposals to speed up the procedures for mobilising this Fund, to ensure that regional disasters remain eligible and to recognise, within this Fund, the specific nature of natural disasters in the Mediterranean, such as drought and fires.

Janusz Lewandowski (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) The proposal to mobilise the Solidarity Fund once again is contained in amending budget No 3/2008. The previous application benefiting the United Kingdom (EUR 162 million) together with the application currently under consideration to benefit Greece and Slovenia (totalling EUR 98 million) leaves considerable scope for manoeuvre in the second half of 2008, bearing in mind that the annual ceiling for Solidarity Fund resources is approximately EUR 1 billion. Furthermore, other formal requirements contained in the interinstitutional agreement of 17 May 2006 have been met. The Committee on Budgets was able to obtain all necessary additional clarification at the meeting in May attended by representatives of the countries that suffered natural disasters in 2007. The countries concerned were Greece, which was affected by forest fires, and Slovenia, which was affected by floods.

As is customary in such cases, the only concerns relate to the time it takes for the Union's institutions to react. This issue has been raised *ad nauseam*. The applications by Greece and Slovenia were received in October and November of 2007. The amending budget was submitted by the European Commission on 14 April 2008. Although this does indeed indicate that the process was swifter than in the past, the pace remains unsatisfactory. There is therefore all the more reason to highlight the swift response by the European Parliament, and the good cooperation between the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Budgets, regarding favourable consideration of the proposal concerning aid for the affected countries.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I welcome the action taken to help Greece and Slovenia recover from 2007's forest fires. In pledging EUR 89.7 million and EUR 8.3 million to Greece and Slovenia respectively the EU has shown that it is committed to fostering solidarity among its members. I therefore voted in support of Reimer Böge's report on the mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) Natural disasters cause not only immeasurable suffering and numerous deaths; they also destroy essential permanent infrastructure such as electricity transmission lines, roads and bridges. Besides caring and providing for the injured, it is therefore essential to repair and remedy the damage as swiftly as possible. Given that such damage is often extensive, it was decided in 2002 that in such cases, the EU should provide the victims with financial support.

Of course it is important to ensure that the monies are not used inappropriately, but this should not result in a 12-month delay, on average, in the disbursement of these funds, as noted by the Court of Auditors.

- Report: Mathieu Grosch (A6-0037/2008)

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The general aim of the proposal presented by the European Commission is to continue the EU-wide liberalisation of scheduled and occasional coach and bus services – in particular between the various countries within the EU and between these and third countries, including cabotage operations – as from 1 January 2009.

The following are some of the many aspects that we reject:

- those aiming to limit the competence of a state to manage passenger road transport on its territory, particularly in defence of this public service (not to be confused with the so-called 'public interest service' which is privately owned, but financed with public funds);
- removing the concept of 'working time' and solely referring to 'driving time' and 'rest periods', which aims to increase the exploitation of drivers;
- the (re)introduction of the 'twelve-day derogation', in other words the possibility of deferring the weekly rest period for 12 consecutive periods of 24 hours which, in our opinion, could lead to situations endangering

the safety of road transport professionals and passengers. Look at the situations that already occur under more restrictive rules with regard to working time and rest periods.

Hence the reason for our vote against the proposal!

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) I should like to express my support for the report by Mr Grosch on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the common rules for access to the market for coach and bus services (recast) (COM(2007)0264).

The aim of this report is to identify the best possible solution for both regular and occasional services. Its main objective is to simplify legal provisions concerning the provision of bus and coach services. At present, access to this market is governed by two Regulations, pursuant to which occasional international transport services have been liberalised.

In the case of regular international services, there is still a clear need for simplifying measures to be introduced regarding the issue of authorisations to provide such services in all Member States of the European Union. The legal framework should be streamlined, notably by merging the aforementioned Regulations, tightening cooperation between the Member States and introducing sensible provisions. Such measures would greatly simplify the international flow of goods and improve control, as a result of harmonisation of documentation and procedures.

I am also pleased to note the proposed simplification measures relating to regular transport services in border areas. The matter of transit journeys by coach and bus has been dealt with well too. If such transit takes place, the competent authorities in the relevant Member State will only be informed that authorisation has been granted by those European Union Member States affected by the particular transport service.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Grosch report is one of a series of texts on road transport activity and its rules in the European area. This recasting aims to reinforce the capacity and competence of national authorities for issuing or withdrawing licences to or from a carrier in the event of serious infringements of Community legislation. Instances of serious infringement and also the conditions for establishing non-discriminatory sanctions proportional to the seriousness of the infringement have therefore been clarified. To help with assessment, Member States will therefore have access to a register of serious infringements committed by road transport undertakings, linked to the national register of these undertakings.

I believe that this recasting will result in more administrative simplification and greater legal security for this economic activity and also for undertakings complying with the rules. Will this mean that we can finally hope for a real road transport market for coach and bus services that is open and competitive and that guarantees the most stringent conditions in terms of road safety?

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I am voting in favour of the report put forward by our colleague Mathieu Grosch on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on common rules for access to the market for coach and bus services.

I agree with the proposal to liberalise coach and bus services within the Member States, not only so as to simplify the European legislative framework in this area but also so as to enhance cooperation among EU countries.

In order to do this it is necessary to standardise identity and identification documents throughout the united Europe, in order to facilitate the checks that a Member State is entitled to carry out when passengers, as well as transiting through that state, engage in cabotage operations.

To this end, I hope that the authorities of Member States whose territory is crossed will be given prior information.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE), *in writing*. – (RO) The new amended form of the report observes the agreement between the social partners regarding the reintroduction of derogation from the 12 resting days for coach drivers carrying out international passengers transport.

I voted for amendment 31 establishing the conditions applicable for drivers employed in an international transport service for the delay of the weekly rest period of up to 12 consecutive periods of 24 hours which follow the period preceding the weekly rest. These conditions are: the international occasional transport service must include at least 24 hours in a Member State or a third country, other than the one in which the service started; the weekly rest period after the application of derogation must always be at least a normal

weekly rest of 45 hours; a compensatory rest period of 24 hours is effectuated constantly before the end of the third week following the derogation implementation; in the case that the driving period is carried out without interruption between the hours 22.00-6.00, the vehicle is provided with two drivers or the driving period is reduced to three hours; starting with January 1st 2014, the implementation of this derogation is possible only in the case of vehicles provided with recording equipment according to the European regulations.

- Report: Horst Schnellhardt (A6-0143/2008)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We have chosen to vote for this report. The hygiene package has given rise to debate in several Member States, including Sweden.

In the great majority of cases, however, the problem has not been the legislation in itself but the implementation of the legislation by the national authorities.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The EU is sacrificing public health for the sake of the profits of European monopolies, which are demanding fewer checks and restraints. A typical example of EU policy is the latest food scandal of sunflower oil mixed with petroleum, with its disastrous effects on health. Instead of taking measures to step up restraints on the uncontrolled proceedings of multinationals, the EU and the Member States' governments are merely intervening on exports of sunflower oil from Ukraine. At the same time, the EU Food Safety Directive is allowing oils and other liquid cargoes intended for human consumption to be carried by container ships transporting petroleum oils and other toxic fluids.

On the pretext of reducing administrative costs for small businesses, the Commission proposes to make yet another exception to the Food Safety Directive, which in itself is inadequate. Checks on food will be made even more difficult because large multinationals are using monopolies to hide behind in order to avoid any responsibility while carrying on activities that are dangerous and very damaging to public health.

Safe food, in sufficient quantities and at low prices for the workers, is unlikely to be available unless there is a shift in EU policy that serves the interests of the food multinationals and the increase in their profits.

Edite Estrela (PSE), in writing. – (PT) I voted against the Schnellhardt report on the hygiene of foodstuffs because I consider that the Commission's proposed amendment of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, aimed at exempting small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the food sector from the application of the HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) system, is not currently justified given that to date there is no evidence of specific problems with the application of this procedure. I consider that 2009, the date when this Regulation must be reviewed, would be the right time to propose any amendments, if they are justified.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The European Parliament today adopted, at first reading, a report on the exemption of food business operators from the Regulation on the hygiene of foodstuffs. This exemption shall apply to micro-enterprises which sell foodstuffs and not to supermarkets or franchised supermarket chains. Experience in Portugal shows that this exemption is essential both to defend traditional gastronomy and its associated habits and customs, and to protect family enterprises, which represent a large part of the workers in this sector and which are the ones facing the most difficulties given the competitive imbalance with large groups.

Furthermore, the introduction, application and maintenance of processes based on the principles of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, which may be important for large enterprises to guarantee food safety, cannot be equally applied to large and small enterprises, particularly in the catering sector.

While it is true that the legislation on foodstuffs must guarantee a high level of protection for the lives and health of people and the interests of consumers, this cannot be confused with the end of traditions and attacks on the gastronomic culture of each country and each region.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The EU's regulations on the hygiene of foodstuffs are of importance across the Member States. They have however at times proven to be somewhat burdensome on smaller businesses. I welcome the proposals to exempt micro-enterprises and accordingly voted in favour of the Schnellhardt report.

Zita Pleštinšká (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) I voted for the report by Mr Horst Schnellhardt because it will result in the reduction of bureaucratic burdens for small and medium-sized enterprises in the food industry, in particular for micro-enterprises (bakeries etc.), it will make business activities more attractive and it will create new jobs.

The report introduces several changes concerning small and medium-sized enterprises producing and selling food, operating on regional and local markets. These are not veterinary regulations. When considering the food hygiene package, Parliament wanted above all to ensure the highest possible level of food safety and at the same time to establish a practicable and flexible control mechanism.

Those small and medium-sized enterprises that can prove that there are no hazards in the area of food hygiene and that the hygiene of foodstuffs is regularly controlled are exempt from HACCP procedures. The HACCP system provides a hazard analysis and a critical control point method. It was developed in the US in the 1960s by NASA, when the Agency needed to ensure 100% safety of all foodstuffs and nutritional products. In 1992 the system was incorporated into European legislation.

The Food Code of the Slovak Republic refers to HACCP as 'Proper Production Practice'. Preparing documentation is complicated and owners of micro-enterprises are discouraged from doing business by unjustifiable bureaucracy. Since the hygiene regulations in Slovakia are far stricter than those in the 15 old Member States, it is necessary to harmonise the hygiene rules across the entire EU.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I support Horst Schnellhardt's proposal on the hygiene of foodstuffs.

This proposal addresses two distinct problems: firstly, reducing red tape in respect of transport costs and conditions, and secondly, adjusting the rules exempting micro-enterprises from the requirements deriving from the HACCP system, aimed at guaranteeing the maximum degree of food safety and ensuring a high level of protection for human life and health, as well as for consumer interests.

I agree that the HACCP procedures should remain in place: their removal would lessen the likelihood of achieving these objectives, given that the procedures serve the interests of food business operators, enhance food safety standards and levels of responsibility, and guarantee fair competition and flexibility in the free movement of foodstuffs and feedingstuffs intended for consumption within the Community. This amendment should, lastly, be extended to and approved by all Member States without exception, laying down safety requirements in no uncertain terms.

Marianne Thyssen (PPE-DE), in writing. – (NL) Mr President, if we mean well toward small and medium-sized enterprises, we have to pass laws that they are also able to comply with.

That also applies to the hygiene regulations for the food sector. Last year the Commission presented a proposal to amend the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 to bring them more into line with what is achievable for the smallest enterprises.

The amendments proposed by the Commission are very useful because they still require small companies to meet hygiene standards but at the same time they relieve them of red tape and of the obligations that are genuinely not feasible for small businesses. On the one hand, it is unfortunate that Parliament has not completely followed the Commission. On the other hand, I voted for the final report because we have been able to make some progress towards a solution.

I still regret the fact that the responsibility is being shifted on to the Member States. Member States will now have to take up their responsibility and allow their small and medium-sized enterprises to depart from the strict HACCP requirements.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE), in writing. – (RO) The Regulation No 11 on eliminating discrimination in terms of tariffs and transport conditions requires carriers to hold a transport document which should contain, among others, the distances, routes and borders passage points. In the field of transportations, the proposal aims at the reduction of certain obligations to provide statistics in the transportations field. Yet, as far as this modification is concerned, only the European Parliament has been consulted.

I voted for amendment no. 12, submitted by the European Socialist Group, afferent to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, in which the competent bodies are allowed to exempt economic agents in the foods sector from the implementation of one or several of the imposed measures, provided that these bodies are capable of proving that there is no risk that must be avoided, or that all identified risks

are sufficiently and regularly controlled by means of application of the general and special requirements of hygiene of foodstuffs. This refers to bakeries, butcheries, fruit and vegetables shops and, mainly, to market stands. I regret the fact that this amendment did not gather the necessary majority.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), in writing. – (PL) The quality of goods and services is becoming an issue of increasing importance to European society. Quality is a factor in competition between enterprises. One way in which quality is demonstrated is through possession of the relevant certificate of compliance with quality standards. The most widespread and most respected standards are the ISO 9000 series standards.

The HACCP system was officially accepted by the World Health Organisation in 1975. In 1993 it was adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission as an appropriate tool with which to regulate the production of food. It is considered that a properly implemented HACCP system, together with a quality control system compliant with the ISO 9000 standards is the best way to ensure the provision of healthy food.

The fundamental aim of the method and the HACCP system based upon it is to prevent dangers throughout the food chain and ensure the safety of the final product, whilst providing for appropriate reactions should problems arise.

- Report: Karin Scheele (A6-0067/2008)

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Directive 96/22/EC prohibits the use of thyrostatic substances, stilbenes, stilbene derivatives, their salts and esters, which are on list A of Annex II, for administration to 'animals of all species', meaning to both animals or animal products used for human consumption as well as to pets. However, the two products on list B of Annex II may be used under certain conditions. The Commission's amendment proposes:

- to exclude pet animals from the scope of this Directive, which means that prohibitions on the use of certain substances simply do not apply any more to them and they may therefore be treated with these substances;

- that the hormone oestradiol 17 β which was temporarily allowed to be used for farm animals for the treatment of foetus maceration or mummification or for pyrometer will now be banned completely. The fourth application for oestrus induction in cattle, horses, sheep or goats was granted only until October 2006 and has already expired. This substance is considered to be carcinogenic and alternatives now exist on the market so that the use of this hormone is redundant and can be banned completely.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The Commission proposes to exclude pet animals from the scope of Council Directive 96/22/EC which would enable their treatment with substances having a thyrostatic action and with beta-agonists.

This important measure is intended to reduce the suffering of pet animals and will allow the use, for example, of substances having a thyrostatic action for the treatment of hyperthyroidism in these animals.

However, the most recent developments in scientific assessment tell us that using these substances is economically unattractive in animal production for human consumption or can be replaced with alternative substances.

It is therefore proposed to prohibit entirely the use of oestradiol 17 β and its esters in animal production for human consumption, putting an end to the various derogations that still exist today. I would point out that these hormones, when used to promote growth, can be carcinogenic to human beings and that the existing derogations can finally be ended as these hormones can be replaced with alternative substances without any problems.

These changes will ensure a high level of protection for consumers of meat and animal derivatives while at the same time allowing the treatment and reduction of suffering of pet animals.

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) I support the report by Mrs Scheele on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council directive 96/22/EC concerning prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and of beta agonists (COM(2007)0292). This report represents an effort to find an optimum solution catering both for the need to protect human beings, the consumers, and the need to ensure animal welfare. The report also takes account of scientific research in this area of veterinary science. In particular, I welcome the complete ban on the use of the hormonal substance named oestradiol 17 β in the rearing of animals raised for meat production. I believe the ban is entirely appropriate. Priority must be given to the effort to achieve an

appropriate level of food safety, especially bearing in mind that the products referred to in the Directive can cause serious cancers in human beings.

On the other hand, the proposed changes provide for effective treatment of pet animals, such as those suffering from hyperthyroidism or other distressing conditions. There is therefore provision for the health of both pet and farm animals.

- Report: Helmuth Markov (A6-0200/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my German colleague Helmuth Markov, adopted unanimously in the Committee on International Trade, which proposes amending, in accordance with the consultation procedure, the proposal for a Council regulation applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences for the period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011 and amending various Regulations.

This proposal for a regulation conforms to the 2004 guidelines on the role of the GSP for the 10-year period between 2006 and 2015, which introduced a number of new objectives, such as targeting preferences on countries that most need it, enlarging the product coverage of the GSP to products of interest for developing countries, making the graduation system more transparent and stable and introducing a new special incentive scheme to encourage sustainable development and good governance.

I fully support the report's call for the European Parliament to be more closely involved in this GSP policy, which is crucial for the countries that need it and which costs us EUR 3.5 billion each year in loss of customs revenue.

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) In a society now dominated by a globalised economic market, in a world where three billion human beings live on less than two dollars a day and more than one billion survive on just one dollar, stimulating economic development in the so-called third world by means of appropriate trade policies is a duty incumbent upon the Community institutions.

In order to achieve this shared goal, we must seek adequate means of both bringing about an improvement in the economic circumstances of developing countries and gradually, increasingly, integrating them into the world market.

In addition, over and above purely economic factors such as market share, other criteria must be borne in mind, such as the beneficiaries' levels of development and commitment to embark on the road to democracy. Encouragement should moreover be given to those products which are often distinctive of a given country's economy.

While pursuing these goals, however, we must take care not to restrict the developing countries' economies to producing a limited range of goods, especially if these are low added-value products, since that would hamper – rather than foster – development and economic growth in those countries.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Markov's report on the system of preferential customs duties granted to developing countries is an act of faith in the beneficial effects of global free trade, particularly for the poorest countries.

However, when I turn on the television and watch the news it seems that it is in those countries that famines are taking place. It seems that it is the choice of the major export crops, to the detriment of the local crops designed to ensure food independence, that is one of the causes of these tragedies. It seems that 38 years of preferential systems have not made much of an impact on the economic and social situation of these countries and their populations.

It seems that if a system takes so long to generate the benefits purported by its ideological supporters, if it leaves so many people behind, in all countries, if it accentuates inequalities and poverty, it is no longer time to modify it along the way; it is quite simply time to abandon it.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) As we have highlighted previously, the current Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) is based on a logic that is in itself contradictory. In other words, development is promoted in order to liberalise international trade through a model promoting exports, regulated at world level, with a 'centre' and a 'periphery'.

This logic prevents fair international relations and aid for the development of the endogenous factors of less economically developed countries, without which – together with the theft of foreign debt and the imposition of the interests of large multinationals from the US, EU and Japan – these countries will continue to have a peripheral and subordinate status.

Trade is a component of development but is far from being the most important.

The GSP guarantees preferential access for products originating from a very wide range of countries. The GSP applies to products of particular importance for Portugal (canned tuna, tomato concentrate, textiles and clothing).

Textiles and clothing are particularly affected, especially due to the existence of a high graduation threshold for the sector. This and other negative aspects need to be changed, otherwise there will be serious consequences for the national productive sector which will result in social and economic consequences.

- Motion for a resolution: Deterioration of the situation in Georgia (RC-B6-0278/2008)

Adam Bielan (UEN), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, the treatment meted out to Georgia by Russia is simply unacceptable by international standards. It is abundantly clear that Russia is exploiting its economic influence in many EU countries to see how far it can pursue its neo-imperialistic ambitions. It is doing its utmost to block all relations between Georgia and the West. I wish to stress once again that EU or UN forces should immediately replace Russia's so-called peacekeeping armed forces in Abkhazia.

The European Union should constantly demonstrate full support for Georgia, as has been the case in the House today. In addition, the Union should systematically strengthen cooperation and immediately introduce visa facilitation measures for Georgians, especially now that fully democratic elections have been held.

The resolution adopted today is an expression of precisely that kind of support for a sovereign Georgia. I am glad that it was at the initiative of Law and Justice Members that a debate was held in the European Parliament at the beginning of May. That debate resulted in today's resolution, which represents Europe's official stance on the issue of Georgia.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Among the various important aspects that could be highlighted in relation to this resolution, I must point out the profound hypocrisy of those who are currently reiterating their full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state when they are the same ones who instigated and supported the illegal and illegitimate 'operation' by the US-NATO-EU against Yugoslavia. This operation was an example of interference, destabilisation, aggression and military occupation and culminated in the unilateral declaration of independence of the Serbian province of Kosovo, with total disregard for international law.

Once again we are seeing clear signs – which we reject – of interference and reinforcement of the presence, including the military presence, of the US-NATO-EU in this region which is increasingly important in geostrategic terms.

See, for example, the conclusions of the recent NATO Summit in Bucharest where a political commitment was made on the accession of Georgia to this offensive military alliance. See, for example, the calls for 'deeper European involvement' and 'bolstering the international presence in the conflict zone by sending an ESDP border mission' (in other words, a mission from the EU which contains 21 member countries of NATO and in which the ESDP – European Security and Defence Policy – is the European pillar of NATO). See, for example, the initiatives to set up 'broad and comprehensive free trade agreements' between the EU and Georgia.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of adoption of the resolution on Georgia. The people of Georgia need our support and solidarity. Solidarity is not so necessary when all is well and everyone is happy. It is very much needed, however, in times of difficulty and hardship. The people of Georgia are currently experiencing hardship. We should not only show the people of Georgia our support, but also do all in our power to protect them and their country from a conflict with potentially tragic consequences.

There are strong indications that Georgia and Russia were recently on the brink of armed conflict. It is our duty to convince all sides to opt for peaceful political solutions. I am convinced that even the most difficult problems can be resolved through negotiation, by seeking compromise and being guided by the principles of goodwill. I hope too that the international community will actively and effectively support the mediation process and the search for a permanent and just solution acceptable to both sides.

In addition, the situation in Georgia demonstrates how important our neighbourhood policy is for our policy as a whole. This is particularly true of the Eastern dimension of the neighbourhood policy.

Siiiri Oviir (ALDE), *in writing.* – (ET) Georgia is undoubtedly going through a difficult period. On the one hand there is a dislike on the part of the opposition operating within the country of open dialogue with the party in power. On the other hand there are Georgia's relations with Russia because of separatism in the Georgian province of Abkhazia and the situation in South Ossetia, where Georgia's sovereignty has been threatened. Russia has unilaterally increased the presence of its military forces at the border. To my mind, the EU must start to take steps to replace Russia's so-called peace-keepers with the genuine article.

In my view, since the Foreign Ministries of the EU Member States supported Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity at the internationally recognised border, the EU must, through its representative, take the lead role in resolving the conflict between Russia and Tbilisi on Georgia's separatist regions, by proposing confidence-building and security measures to each party.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) Our message is clear: we are denouncing the dangerous escalation of the conflict in this region and reiterating the EU's support for Georgia.

The recent developments in Georgia, and more specifically in Abkhazia, are of great concern. A deterioration of the links between Georgia and Russia could be the start of a negative spiral for the Caucasus region.

I was part of the delegation that visited Georgia to observe the elections on 21 May 2008 and I witnessed the intense efforts being made by Tbilisi in its democratisation process. This significant progress, which I observed when monitoring 14 polling stations in the Gori area, should not obscure the difficulties that persist in the region. Much remains to be done and the EU will have to play its role, over and above observing the elections, by providing long-term support for a reform process.

The EU must learn from the Balkan experience: it cannot stand idly by when faced with a conflict on its doorstep. In approving this resolution, I am calling on the two sides in the conflict to refrain from carrying out any further acts that could result in an escalation of the tension. It is essential to focus our efforts on rebuilding dialogue and persuading Russia to withdraw its troops from Abkhazia.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), *in writing.* – British Conservatives reject much of Paragraphs 6 and 8 which refer to ESDP missions. We are against ESDP in principle and do not regard the EU as the appropriate organisation to be undertaking security missions in far-off areas of potential conflict. Furthermore we are disappointed that NATO's Bucharest Summit did not extend the invitation for Georgia to join NATO's Membership Action Plan.

- Report: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (A6-0189/2008)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), *in writing.* – (SV) We have chosen to abstain on recital E. The CFSP and the common security and defence policy will probably require increased budgetary resources in future, but we do not want to pre-empt the forthcoming mid-term review of the long-term budget by taking a view on individual parts of it at this stage.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing.* – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by my esteemed Polish colleague Jacek Saryusz-Wolski on the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which have helped to reinforce European identity and the role of the European Union in the world. I agree that the CFSP must become more democratically legitimate by allowing Parliament to exercise real control over this policy and speak with a single voice as well and by emphasising various priorities: the causes of the current insecurity in Europe (terrorism, organised crime), energy security, fight against climate change and sustainable development, improvement in the stability of neighbouring regions, crisis management and conflict prevention/resolution, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, migration management, and promotion of human rights and civil freedoms throughout the world. The first of the geographical priorities must be ensuring stability in the Western Balkans and strengthening the dialogue with Serbia and Kosovo.

I support the idea that the European Parliament should put forward specific proposals on the financing and budgetary control of the future European External Action Service (EEAS).

Adam Bielan (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, I should like to begin by congratulating Mr Saryusz-Wolski on his report concerning the European Union's common foreign and security policy.

I agree with the rapporteur that it is not enough simply to speak of a common foreign policy. We have to prove that the European Union is prepared to adopt a common position on crucial issues. In relation to important matters such as the aggressive energy policy conducted by Russia, the events in Kosovo and the case of Tibet, the Union has recently demonstrated that the CFSP remains a distant goal. As long as the European Union allows its credibility on the international arena to be undermined, as in the aforementioned cases, and as long as individual Member States continue to act on a bilateral basis, implementation of the CFSP will continue to be merely an aim.

There is nothing to be gained from yet another provision on common policy if we do not begin to speak with one voice on matters of vital interest to Europe.

Glyn Ford (PSE), *in writing*. – I will be voting in favour of this report. I did vote for Green Amendment 7 that complains of President Sarkozy's 'sales offensive on nuclear technology worldwide'. I am afraid this macho technology drives far too much of French foreign policy. The rumour is that the reason France is the only Member State not to have established diplomatic relations with North Korea is not through any concern with human rights but because of a failure in 2001 of the then South Korean Government to promise the French nuclear industry a disproportionate share of the nuclear contracts associated with the KEDO project to build two light water reactors in North Korea in exchange for the freezing of their graphite-moderated reactor at Taechon capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium. France's nuclear obsession makes us all less safe.

Anna Hedh (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) I voted 'no' because I do not want the EU's common foreign policy and armed forces to be strengthened, with all that that entails.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I fully support my own group's Amendment 7 to the Saryusz-Wolski report expressing concern at President Sarkozy's sales offensive on nuclear technology worldwide, which could lead to enhanced nuclear proliferation. The people of Scotland take a huge interest in nuclear issues, given that the UK's nuclear weapons are based on our territory. Scotland rejects the London government's plans to build a new generation of nuclear weapons and I fully support the Scottish Government's work to ensure these weapons do not come into existence.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – Mr Saryusz-Wolski's report on the annual report on the CFSP seeks to define the common values and priorities regarding Europe's global role. With the Lisbon Treaty, the EU would have a more effective and coherent voice on international affairs and I welcome the fact that the report deals with the treaty's contribution in this domain. I voted in favour of the report.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – British Conservatives do not wish to see British foreign policy subsumed by the EU. We reject the Treaty of Lisbon, any idea of an EU 'foreign minister' or an EU seat on the UN Security Council, and any EU role in defence. We therefore voted against the Report. Of course we welcome opportunities for 27 nations to speak with one voice where this is wholly consistent with British foreign policy interests. Similarly, we support better coordinated humanitarian action, and a more robust approach in dealing with abhorrent regimes in Zimbabwe, Burma, and elsewhere.

- Report: Helmut Kuhne (A6-0186/2008)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) We have abstained in the vote on all parts which refer to NATO, since we come from a country which has no military alliances.

As regards Amendment 14, we think that it is factually incorrect to say that the Treaty does not permit military intentions. Even now EU resources are being used for military operations, but not for a common EU defence force.

Graham Booth (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – We generally vote against EU legislation and indeed voted against this report as a whole. However, we felt that there were a number of amendments we could vote for. We voted yes to Amendments 10 and 12, as they reject the militarisation of the EU. We too oppose the militarisation of the EU. These amendments did not call on the Commission to act, nor did they acknowledge the authority of the Commission or EU. They were simple statements that happened to agree with us on this

particular question. Therefore, we could vote for these two amendments without compromising our overall stance to both this report as a whole and EU legislation in general.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) If you had any doubts about the real meaning, ambition and scope of the so-called Treaty 'of Lisbon', you would only have to carefully read the resolutions on the 'ESDP' (European Security and Defence Policy) and the 'CFSP' (common foreign and security policy), adopted by a majority of this House, for these doubts to disappear.

The forces promoting 'European integration' – namely the major financial and economic groups, the social democrats and the right – are trying to affirm the EU as an imperialist bloc under the control of its major powers.

In addition to confirming the EU's policy of interference (as seen in the 'missions' to Afghanistan, Chad/Central African Republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Guinea-Bissau) and operational capability ('to undertake rapidly and simultaneously two ESDP military operations'), this report is a real guide to militarisation and militarism. Just as an example, the report highlights the following objectives: extension of the 'European Security Strategy'; military dimension of 'civil missions'; militarisation of 'development aid' and 'development' as an instrument of interference; reinforcement of means of military transport (A400M military aircraft and helicopters); increase in expenditure on 'defence' and military actions, including using the Community budget; operational capability to conduct EU military actions, and coordination of projects and the armaments industry.

These, among many others, are the reasons why we voted against this report.

Anna Hedh (PSE), in writing. – (SV) I voted against the report because I do not want the EU's common foreign policy to be strengthened. Besides, I am against the militarisation of the EU.

Richard Howitt (PSE), in writing. – British Labour MEPs voted in favour of this report which looks at the implementation of the European Security Strategy and the continuing role of ESDP missions. In particular Labour MEPs welcome the emphasis in this report on the better functioning of civilian ESDP missions.

Labour MEPs voted against the text of paragraph 39 looking at the role of Eurocorps. While the UK is not involved in Eurocorps, and this force has never been used, Labour MEPs feel it important to emphasise that there are no standing forces under permanent EU command, and we believe that there is no need for such structures.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I welcome Mr Kuhne's report on the annual report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy and ESDP. I would agree with the rapporteur that the Lisbon Treaty reinforces the Union's powers by giving the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy a more important role.

The international nature of the security issues Member States face requires greater European cooperation. I would therefore welcome the introduction of a solidarity clause among Member States on such issues. I voted in favour of the report.

Cristiana Muscardini (UEN), in writing. – (IT) Europe's security needs have changed. The risk of territorial aggression, implicit in the classic conception of defence, has largely been superseded by the dangers arising at regional borders in areas adjoining the territory of the EU. Added to that there is the threat of terrorism and the huge upsurge in migration flows, the radicalisation of fundamentalists and extremists of various kinds, the increase in trafficking and the risk of a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

For the European Union it is not just a matter of equipping ourselves with the means of acting independently to manage international crises, but of establishing a fully-fledged European defence system. However, in the desirable process of expanding its external action capabilities, the EU must not confine itself to the military dimension alone: it must undertake to develop, in parallel, civil crisis management mechanisms involving action by the police, civil administrators, the judiciary, civil protection officers and so on.

The common security policy must therefore be strengthened in order to give the Union a key role on the international geopolitical scene, a role which is distinct but not distant from that of NATO. On this optimistic note I am today voting in favour of the report by Mr Saryusz-Wolski.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The European Union's ambition in terms of security and defence is clearly less than its ability, and this is not just due to the traditional problem of coordinating and cooperating

on external priorities. There is also a central issue that must be tackled. We know that the external dimension and the establishment of operational capabilities lack personnel, availability and cooperation. However, they also require a public perception of the need for, and usefulness of, this cooperation. We must construct this strategy based on cooperation – by specifically investing in interoperability and by creating operational capabilities on the ground – but it is particularly public support that is often missing from this dimension of our policies. Recognition of the need for, and the importance and effectiveness of, the security and defence dimension depends, to a huge extent, on public support which must be generated, and this support depends, to a large extent, on our efforts.

Finally, I would stress the importance of remembering that the Atlantic Alliance is a basic pillar of European security and defence which must not and cannot under any circumstances be disregarded.

- Reports: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (A6-0189/2008) and Helmut Kuhne (A6-0186/2008)

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The two reports put to the vote today – one on the common foreign policy and the other on the security and defence policy – have one thing in common: they take the Member States' foreign and defence policies away from them to the advantage of the civil servants in Brussels.

Diplomacy will be in the hands of a High Representative, a real foreign affairs minister. In addition, since it is shared, there will be a single defence, under the patronage this time of the United States, via NATO and the UN, as clearly indicated in take two of the European Constitution, the Lisbon Treaty. Our military resources are reduced to their simplest expression because the bulk of the budgets is today spent by France and the United Kingdom and subject to the Stability Pact. The French and British permanent seats on the UN Security Council will no doubt be combined into one and handed over to an all-powerful European... In short, none of the EU Member States will have the political and military resources to ensure their own independence and freedom. In any case, for the most part they have already handed these over to the Eurocrats. We are completely opposed to this disastrous development.

- Motion for a resolution: EU-United States Summit (RC-B6-0277/2008)

Adam Bielan (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, I supported the resolution on the EU-United States summit because in addition to matters pertaining to bilateral partnership and global challenges it refers to the visa question, which is an issue of great importance to Polish nationals.

Polish nationals wishing to visit the United States as tourists still have to go through the complicated and costly procedure of obtaining a visa.

Approximately 25% of visa applications by Poles are rejected. The main, and sometimes the only, reason for rejection is the consular officials' suspicion that the applicant might be intending to undertake illegal work. In fact, most Poles travel to the United States to visit relations. Some three quarters of the 10 million Poles resident in the United States hail from the Lesser Poland region of my country, which explains why there are such long queues in front of the American consulate in Krakow.

I believe that the very existence of such a procedure in relation to a European Union Member State requires the Union to adopt a strong stance in the dialogue with the United States.

Glyn Ford (PSE), *in writing*. – I wish to raise the issue in the context of this debate of US Missile Defence plans, particularly in respect to the Czech Republic. Two thirds of the Czech population are opposed to the building of a radar installation close to Prague as part of these plans.

Two Czech peace activists have been on hunger strike for three weeks in protest at the Czech Government's obstinate support for these plans, despite little evidence that they will do other than make Europe's security worse rather than better. I welcome the fact that these two are now being joined by key political figures each fasting for 24 hours.

I agree with them that the EU needs to reach a common position on the installation of these Star War technologies in Europe. We need an urgent debate in this Chamber with the Council. I hope the President will push for this next month.

Hélène Goudin (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) Junilistan sympathises wholeheartedly with those parts of the Resolution which deal with the treatment of American prisoners and their transportation through European countries. The United States must either bring the captives before a court or release them, in

accordance with international law. The conditions prevailing at Guantanamo and other prisons are totally unacceptable.

Unfortunately the report deals with far too many matters going beyond this problem, questions for which other international bodies, in particular the United Nations, are competent. We do not think that the European Parliament has a role to play as regards the political situation in countries which are not in the immediate vicinity of the EU, such as Iran, Kosovo or Iraq. The European Parliament should also not attempt to expand European foreign policy by calling on other countries to develop cooperation and common strategies on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. These are highly charged questions which are best dealt with from the perspectives of the Member States themselves and in cooperation with legitimate international organisations competent for these matters. Junilistan also has strong criticism for that part of the resolution which seeks to allocate large parts of the EU and United States budgets to the sponsorship of agricultural research.

Richard Howitt (PSE), in writing. – British Labour MEPs are delighted to have voted in favour of this resolution in advance of the EU-US summit on the 10th of June. We hope that this resolution will aid in making this Summit a productive one. In particular Labour MEPs welcome the call made for the EU and US to work closely together on a wide range of common policy challenges; the call for the EU and US to place the Millennium Development Goals at the heart of international development policy is also one which Labour MEPs wholeheartedly support.

British Labour MEPs voted to abstain on amendment 8, as we believe that this text does not offer a balanced approach to this issue. We believe that discussions must also focus on Russia's obligations, and include wider international disarmament efforts, as explicitly recommended in the successful Socialist Group amendment to the European Security and Defence Policy report, also voted today.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – The upcoming US presidential election is an opportunity to move away from the type of foreign policy practised under the Bush administration. Such a change should involve Europe and the EU should be looking to strengthen the EU-US partnership, especially when addressing global challenges such as climate change and poverty. I support Mr Wiersma's motion for a resolution.

Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) We, the MEPs of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), are voting against the joint resolution for the following reasons:

- it calls for the imperialist cooperation between the United States and the EU to be strengthened by boosting NATO in order to manipulate and exploit peoples and states;
- it confirms the strategic anti-popular EU-US alliance against 'terrorism'. However many hypocritical appeals are made to respect human rights, the alliance is nothing more than a pretext for jointly waging a relentless war against the people;
- the resolution uses the excuse of the effects of climate change on countries and peoples to prepare the way for new imperialist interventions in league with the United States;
- through its policy of treating all sides equally, the resolution in fact supports the occupying Israeli forces and their crimes at the expense of the Palestinian people. It accepts the continued occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and suggests practical cooperation measures between the United States and the EU in the Euro-NATO protectorate of Kosovo.

The resolution is yet more proof of the irreversible strategic agreement between the EU and the United States at the expense of the people. The resolution flaunts political might to show that the EU is supposedly a rival of the United States, which it feels inferior to.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) One of the most surprising facts of European policy is the way in which relations between Europe and the United States are treated, particularly when compared to the methods used to present our relations with other partners who are more politically and culturally different.

It is clear that there are differences of opinion, disagreements, competition and interests, particularly legitimate economic interests, which put us in different places and positions. However, it is essential that we have control over the tensions and divergences between partners in the same project. It is important to recognise this so that we can act and react to whatever we are facing. In this respect, properly removing the barriers to trade which are unnecessary and unjustifiable between partners such as Europe and the US is one of the first steps to be taken. Likewise, if we truly want to respond to the threatened rise in poverty, which is an

unnecessary result of increased global demand, it is important that we cooperate among ourselves and in particular with the rest of the world, to ensure that struggling countries can achieve the commercial openness needed to build their own wealth. A more prosperous world can be constructed on the basis of a solid alliance between free societies which stimulate creation.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – British Conservatives are strong supporters of the Transatlantic Relationship; however, we do not agree on redefining this as a relationship between the EU and the US, particularly in defence matters, and we therefore reject much of paragraph 16.

- Jacek Saryusz-Wolski report (A6-0189/2008) and motion for a resolution on the EU-United States Summit (RC-B6-0277/2008)

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) While clearly revealing its inter-imperialist contradictions, this resolution reaffirms the cooperation between the EU and the US and the aim of reinforcing their partnership – particularly in light of the forthcoming US presidential election – in sharing ‘responsibility’ in the world.

The resolution reaffirms the EU as a European pillar of NATO, as indicated in the ‘European Security Strategy’, and urges the EU and the US to ‘work more closely together on a wide range of common policy challenges, notably in the Middle East, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo and the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and Africa’.

Looking forward to 60 years of NATO, the resolution calls for the launch of ‘a redefined and stronger EU-NATO partnership’ and points to the adjustment of the ‘European Security Strategy’ to the new strategic concept of NATO under discussion. In line with the militarism of the Treaty ‘of Lisbon’, it looks forward ‘to a reassessment of the security dimension of EU-US relations in the light of the outcome of the NATO Strategic Review, the update of the European Security Strategy and the arrival in office of a new US Administration’.

In other words, it establishes and affirms the EU as a political-economic-military bloc which hopes to share control of the world (by seeking to rebalance its relations) with the US. The world and the people who are looked after ...

- Motion for a resolution: Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (RC-B6-0281/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the joint resolution tabled by five political groups on the Union for the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean region and the Middle East are of strategic importance for the Union and it is essential to implement a Mediterranean policy founded on solidarity, dialogue, cooperation and trade in order to tackle the common challenges and achieve the declared objective, namely the creation of an area of peace, stability and shared prosperity. I welcome the initiative of the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, to whom this Union for the Mediterranean owes a great deal, and I wish him every success with the inaugural summit, due to be held in Paris on 13 July. I support the political proposal to give this future Union a parliamentary dimension on the basis of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. I welcome the examples of proposed initiatives such as the coastal motorways, the linking-up of the Arab Maghreb Motorway (AMA), the de-pollution of the Mediterranean, civil protection, the Mediterranean Solar Plan, high-power solar thermal electricity generation in the North African desert, the desalination of seawater in order to facilitate access to drinking water, etc.

Patrick Gaubert (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the adoption of the joint resolution on the ‘Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean’.

This resolution rightly highlights the strategic interest of the Mediterranean region and the Middle East for the European Union. Our policy towards these countries must be based on the principles of solidarity, dialogue and cooperation.

The Barcelona Process warrants being re-launched today in order to make it as efficient as possible. To this end, the Commission’s initiative is a step in the right direction and has the merit of concentrating on specific regional projects, which will make it possible to provide an effective response to the needs of the citizens of this region.

The Commission proposal also recommends the establishment of a Barcelona Process co-presidency, a Joint Permanent Committee and a secretariat, which will help to improve cooperation and dialogue between the various partners.

In addition, it states that the main objectives of this policy must continue to be promotion of the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and political pluralism.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the European Union is not done with disowning hyper-President Sarkozy: rejection of the proposals on fuel tax, warnings against the budgetary slides and, now, transformation of the proposed Union for the Mediterranean into a re-launch of the Barcelona Process, which has been a failure for more than 10 years.

This is the death of the project concerning cooperation between the countries bordering the *mare nostrum*, led by France. From now on the entire Union will be involved and it is the Commission in Brussels that will be at the controls. That is what was decided by the real boss: Mrs Merkel's Germany.

This matter perfectly illustrates two realities: Mr Sarkozy's agitation and media hype only serve to mask his powerlessness; France's interests are in the hands of the officials in Brussels and dependent upon those of the European Union.

We sincerely hope that Ireland, a nation that has such a great love of freedom and that has paid dearly for it in the course of its history, will be the country that delivers us from this Eurocratic construction that is increasingly unfounded and increasingly tyrannical.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) If you only read the resolution adopted today, you would tend to believe in the most genuine and benevolent intentions of the EU with regard to the 'Union for the Mediterranean'. Its careful language reveals only a few hints of interference and the omnipresent objectives of the 'establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area' and 'free trade', accompanied, of course, by 'social' and 'environmental' palliatives and rhetoric.

However, the European Commission makes it clear that 'the Mediterranean region is an area of vital strategic importance to the European Union in both political and economic terms'. It talks about the 'significant progress [that] has been made towards the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area by 2010', pointing to the need for the EU's Mediterranean partners to pursue 'further and faster reforms'. The Commission puts forward a series of priorities such as transport (pointing to the possibility of setting up a concession scheme of interest to the private sector and accompanied by governmental measures to ensure free trade and abolish the various non-tariff obstacles preventing trade) and increasing the integration of the energy markets.

The EU wants to economically, politically and militarily control the whole Mediterranean region and is seeking to dominate its markets and exploit its immense resources.

That is capitalism, you fool!

Carl Lang (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The very title of the resolution underlines Mr Sarkozy's failure. Not content with being the President of the French Republic, he was trying to become the designer, then the president, of a Euro-Mediterranean Union, open only to the countries bordering the Mediterranean.

Even before his European presidency begins, his house of cards is collapsing. Germany has imposed its positions: all the EU Member States will participate in this project, designed to be a simple expansion of the Barcelona Process, managed by the Eurocrats in Brussels.

This fiasco illustrates the debasement of our country in the European institutions. The Europe of Brussels, far from strengthening France, as the UMP and PS claim, is making it weaker in all sectors: in the economic sector, with the destruction of our small farms, the collapse and relocation of our industries; in the military sector, with the dismantlement of our army, now required to dissolve into a Euro corps; in the demographic sector, with immigration that is threatening our national identity.

Only a new Europe, a Europe of nation states, founded on the sovereignty of the nations and on the founding values of our European and Christian civilisation, will enable France to become a major player once again and implement in the Mediterranean a major cooperation policy aimed, *inter alia*, at ensuring that the immigrant populations return to their home countries.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (NL) For some time now the European Union has been working to develop special cooperative relations with the countries on the African and Asian shores of the Mediterranean Sea. This cooperation constantly raises the question of whether it means that we support the dictatorship in Syria or that we approve of the way in which Israel is delaying the creation of an equal and internationally

recognised Palestinian State. The idea of the French President, Mr Sarkozy, for a special union between the EU and all the countries of the Mediterranean, calls especially for support among the public of the EU Member States that border the Mediterranean Sea. The establishment of such a union could contribute to the EU building up spheres of influence in the region with unequal partners, following the example of the traditional agreements between the US and parts of Latin America. It could also serve to legitimise the dictatorships in Tunisia, Libya and Syria, and to a lesser extent Algeria and Egypt. It would make it easier to send refugees back to such states. It would also give us the chance to upgrade contacts with Israel now, instead of waiting until after the recognition of a neighbouring Palestinian State. It is only because of these underlying problems that I am not voting for this resolution now.

Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The MEPs of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) have voted against the joint resolution. The Union for the Mediterranean does not in the final analysis have equal, mutually profitable relations with the states of the region. Instead, it supports the EU's imperialist plans for the wider region of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The aim of this Union is to liberalise markets in order to enable them to be more easily accessed by European monopolies, whose position in the monopolistic fight for control of the markets will be improved. The energy and wealth-producing resources of the region will be plundered. The Union for the Mediterranean will be achieved by intensifying threats, blackmail, and political or even military pressure on states and the people. The resolution is also revealing. The primary objective of the Union for the Mediterranean policy is purportedly for democracy and human rights to be exported from the EU to the Mediterranean countries. This is the pretext the EU uses to justify its imperialist interventions everywhere. In fact, what is being promoted is the imperialist US-NATO-EU plan for the 'New Middle East'. That is why there is no reference to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories or to the genocide of the Palestinian people.

The people should have no illusions about the nature and aims of the Union for the Mediterranean; they should fight against it.

- Report: Donato Tommaso Veraldi (A6-0182/2008)

Adam Bielan (UEN), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, the percentage of young farmers in the European Union continues to fall. Currently, only 7% of farmers are under the age of 35. In many cases, young people leave farming because of the high cost of investment, which means that it is impossible for them to compete on the market.

We should therefore help young farmers to draw on Union funding for this purpose. Young farmers would benefit from low-interest loans enabling them to implement their plans without running the risk of becoming heavily indebted. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that the criteria for accessing Union funding are not too demanding and do not exclude small farms focusing on specialised products rather than on large-scale production. The majority of the farms in southern Poland and in the Lesser Poland and Świętokrzyskie Voivodships fit this description.

Mr Veraldi's report deals with all these matters and I therefore voted in favour of it.

Bernadette Bourzai (PSE), in writing. – (FR) In the light of the difficulty in finding new generations of European farmers, the European Parliament decided to look at the ways to promote the installation of young farmers, which should guide the CAP Health Check. As the shadow rapporteur of the PSE Group, I put forward the following proposals:

- it is a priority to respond to the food, energy, environmental and territorial challenges,
- the new farmers must benefit from support measures, especially those who do not inherit a farm and those who are based in areas with permanent natural handicaps: higher installation aid, subsidies for agricultural loans and accompanying measures following installation,
- these support measures must be compulsory under the second pillar of the CAP and the aspect of access to agricultural property must be examined,
- living conditions in rural areas must be improved: equal access to public services, social amenities, etc.,
- we must develop access to vocational training (replacement during training and access to agricultural research),
- we must promote the farming profession and the standards respected by farmers at European level.

Lena Ek (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) The EU should not concern itself with everything. The principle of a leaner but keener EU implies that the EU should only deal with questions for which there is authority in the founding Treaty and, where demarcation problems arise, proportionality, effectiveness and relevance should be taken into account.

I have chosen to abstain in the final vote on the report on the future for young farmers under the ongoing reform of the common agricultural policy. The report contains many proposals which improve the situation for newly established young operators as well as proposals which can contribute to the increased production of food. But at the same time the text also covers matters which are quite definitely of national significance and should be decided at national level.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Many of the proposals contained in the report, to which we have suggested a few amendments, are on the right lines, particularly those referring to the 'continuing difficulties' facing young farmers, such as high installation costs, a heavy burden of debt and too few available holdings. We have made various proposals to which we would draw the European Commission's attention for the future, in particular:

- the need to adopt the necessary measures to support, accompany and advise young farmers under the initial setting-up scheme with the aim of increasing the success rate and at the same time minimising or putting an end to situations where farmers give up or even become bankrupt;
- the creation of a land bank on the basis of land freed up as a result of early retirement;
- the need to introduce support for the joint acquisition of expensive machinery and equipment which is used infrequently by each individual farmer.

However, we regard as inadequate those measures adopted to tackle the existing problems which make Portugal the EU Member State with the lowest percentage of young farmers (less than 4%). It is essential that, within the current review of the common agricultural policy, productive activity is duly valued, with fair prices for production.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) In recent decades, European rural areas have been increasingly abandoned, a trend which has been accompanied by a gradual ageing of the population.

This ageing of the agricultural population is worrying for the future of European agriculture. That is why I consider the Veraldi report to be very important as it looks at various aspects connected with the expectations and opportunities of young farmers who have a key role to play in the sustainable development of European rural areas.

I believe that young farmers are particularly important to the development of a dynamic agricultural sector in order to achieve the Lisbon Strategy objectives. Under the new common agricultural policy, the generational change must therefore be regarded as one of the priorities.

Urszula Gacek (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PL) We should welcome the fact that by a large majority, the House has adopted the report on the future of young farmers under the ongoing reform of the common agricultural policy.

The statements on increasing European Union aid for young farmers are particularly significant. One of these statements is a declaration concerning easier access to preferential loans for this group of farmers.

Further practical aid is essential in terms of creating real opportunities for young farmers wishing to continue the family tradition in the Lesser Poland Voivodship to obtain a reasonable income.

If the promised aid has the desired effect, the situation whereby villages in Lesser Poland are inhabited solely by older people caring for their grandchildren whose parents feel that the only opportunity open to them is to seek work abroad may become less common. This report therefore has a social dimension as well as an economic one.

Young farmers wish to preserve traditions, but they also understand that if they do not draw on other experiences and technology they will be unable to transform their family farms into modern, competitive and profitable enterprises. Support for the development of modern methods and agricultural production tools is therefore a particularly important feature of the resolution adopted today.

Hélène Goudin (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) As usual, we in Junilistan note that in this case it is fortunate that the European Parliament does not have powers of codecision on the EU's agricultural policy because, if it had, the Union would be caught in a trap of protectionism and heavy subsidies to various groups in the farming industry.

This own-initiative report contains a number of absurd proposals, such as yet another 'European Year', this time for 'urban-rural dialogue'. If every European Year proposed by the European Parliament were to become a reality, every year from now to the end of the century would probably be booked up in advance.

The affirmation in paragraph 35 that rural development measures should be aimed directly at farmers strengthens Junilistan's impression that the old, overburdened 'common agricultural policy' has now merely changed its name to 'rural development' in the EU budget.

It is with disquiet that we note that the European Parliament now calls for the recognition of non-trade concerns as import criteria in the WTO context. We consider that to be nothing more than a preliminary to the introduction of barriers to trade and protectionism against the rest of the world.

I have therefore chosen to vote against the report.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The Veraldi report on the future of young farmers highlights a number of important issues which are of relevance across the EU's rural areas. The report also recognises that farming methods rooted in specific geographical areas and cultural traditions in Europe should be conserved, improved and promoted. I wholeheartedly endorse those sentiments and consider that they can be applied across the EU's workload.

Monica Maria Iacob-Ridzi (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of this report, as I consider that the measures stipulated therein are complementary to the national programmes in this field. The National Programme for Rural Development of Romania provides a measure that offers grants from the rural development funds of the European Union of up to EURO 40.000 per person. Yet, there are difficult conditions to be fulfilled and, consequently, we still have a small number of requests in this regard.

The report we are adopting today provides for a series of significant measures, both in terms of the financial support of young farmers, and in terms of certain essential legal aspects, like the facilitation of succession upon agricultural property or easy access to bank credits. The professional education and training component offered to young people in rural areas is also important. Thus, I consider that future legislation should provide for the huge disproportion between the younger population aged 35, active in the agricultural sector (only 8,5% of the total number of farmers in Europe) and the other age categories in this field.

These measures will definitely contribute to the success of the national programmes, as is the major axis of supporting the young farmers, stipulated by PNDR of Romania.

Christa Klauß (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (DE) What questions do young people nowadays ask themselves when deciding on a career? Do they ask about the nature of the occupation, the prospects it offers for the future, or making a fast buck? The answer to all these questions is often negative when farming is one of the options. Only 7% of farmers are under the age of 35, with the result that this occupation is an alarming state of decline. There are many young people who would enjoy farming: working in the open air and close to nature, surrounded by plants and animals. That is a given. So what deters young people? Is it the lack of prospects, or the general insecurity surrounding the profession? Once, inheriting the family farm provided a very good and very secure living, but today, the heirs are often at a disadvantage due to the many burdens and conditions imposed on them. We know that only well-trained and highly motivated farmers can guarantee our high standards of healthy food and a healthy natural environment here in Europe. However, we must also be aware of the challenges facing young farmers today. We must involve young farmers in political discussions and decision-making to a greater extent. They are the bearers of Europe's hopes! They are the ones who are facing up to the numerous economic and ecological challenges and ensuring a good and well-balanced social environment in the rural regions. They therefore need reliable policies to support them.

Roselyne Lefrançois (PSE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the adoption of this report, which highlights the fundamental challenge generation change in the agricultural sector poses for the European Union.

Young farmers are those who are best placed to respond to the new agricultural challenges. Having benefited from the experience of their elders, they have the necessary dynamism and enthusiasm to carry out the crucial environmental, technological and economic changes that will enable tomorrow's European agriculture to retain a prime position in the world.

We now need to reconcile an increasing level of agricultural production with constant respect for product quality and safety, within the framework of a global approach based on the preservation of natural resources and the environment.

However, these requirements mean ever-increasing financial and personal investments from young farmers. In addition, the acquisition of adapted physical and intellectual tools must receive greater support from the Union, as stated in the report, especially in the area of access to technological innovations.

The CAP cannot afford to neglect those who will ensure that the Community has sustainable food sovereignty that respects man and the environment.

Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by Mr Veraldi because I fully support the initiatives aimed at ensuring the future of sustainable, competitive and productive agriculture in the EU.

It is essential to encourage and facilitate young people's access to the agri-food sector in order to promote generation change and ensure the dynamism of the sector.

In order to enable young farmers to cope with the numerous challenges and expectations, such as the production of quality food, food safety, environmental protection, and preservation of biodiversity and the countryside, it is crucial to review the amount of the setting-up premium, which has not changed for years. In addition, we need to ensure that this premium is accompanied by a business plan so as not to curb the innovative spirit of young farmers.

Nonetheless, we must also be aware that middle-aged farmers are facing the same challenges. It is important to ensure that we do not place them at a disadvantage or harm their existing operating methods.

David Martín (PSE), in writing. – Encouraging young people into the farming sector is essential to guarantee the future of the farming industry. Support should be given to newcomers in the farming sector including young farmers. I support the general direction of the Veraldi report on the future for young farmers under the ongoing reform of the CAP and voted accordingly.

James Nicholson (PPE-DE), in writing. – Statistics show that rural populations across Europe are simultaneously decreasing and ageing. Moreover, the percentage of farms currently managed by young people is extremely low. This is a worrying trend which is affecting all Member States.

Young people are not considering farming as a career option because, in many cases, issues such as the succession of farms and difficulties associated with obtaining credit simply outweigh the benefits of starting out.

This insightful report addresses the most important issues which are deterring young people from entering into farming and suggests some practical solutions for dealing with these problems. After all, if we wish to secure the stability and development of Europe's agriculture sector, we must provide young people with incentives to enter into farming and remove the obstacles which they face.

The report also recognises that, like any other modern industry, farming needs to be competitive, efficient and able to respond and adapt to market demands. We need to take measures which support and encourage young people in this context, as the next generation of farmers are the key to a dynamic and innovative European agriculture sector.

Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) Slovakia, just like other new EU Member States, has a high proportion of rural areas. Rural areas comprise almost 80% of the country's total area, and according to the statistics this is where more than 44% of people live.

The present situation in the food industry, high food prices and the production of quality food are the major challenges for European rural areas. It is good to see that young farmers in particular are interested in the ecological farming system. It gives some guarantee of the growing importance of farming aimed at promoting rural development.

Entrepreneurial spirit in farming has its typical features and carries far greater risks than entrepreneurial spirit in other economic sectors. Many young people think that setting up a farming business is impossible because of the high costs. Introducing various incentives can help young farmers either to set up in business or (later) modernise their enterprises.

I voted for the report by the rapporteur, Mr Donato Tommaso Veraldi, on the future for young farmers under the ongoing reform of the common agricultural policy, because I am convinced that by supporting young farmers we can significantly help to improve the employment rate in peripheral European regions and prevent young people from leaving rural areas.

Brian Simpson (PSE), *in writing*. – I will vote in favour of this report but I must highlight that Amendment 35 is unacceptable to me and I and the British Labour delegation will vote against this particular amendment.

Sustainable rural development is the key to maintaining our countryside and the traditional way of life enjoyed by our rural communities. Indeed, on the issue of modulation, Members may recall that it was only British Labour MEPs who supported concerted efforts to change our priorities away from direct payments and into sustainable rural development.

Farmers have a key role to play in delivering rural sustainability and development, but they are not the only people involved in that delivery, which is why I cannot support Amendment 35.

This Parliament has developed a habit of constantly demanding direct payments to farmers and no doubt it will do the same when we discuss the CAP Health Check in the near future. I think those of us who believe that things need to change in this regard, away from a system that rewards inefficiency at the expense of efficient agriculture, are those who truly believe in sustainable rural development.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The ageing of the agricultural population, the abandonment of cultivated land and the constant reduction in the number of young people working in farming are recent developments that have occurred during the past 20 years. Throughout these years the EU has failed to tackle the problems faced by small and medium-sized farmers, particularly young people. The EU's measures are part of its anti-agricultural policy, which aims to reduce production and concentrate land in the hands of a few large-scale farmers. This will result in the shrinkage of the agricultural population and the abandonment of the countryside, particularly by young people.

The report limits itself to findings. The measures it puts forward are within the framework of this policy, so they hide the real reason behind the problems: the EU's confrontational policy. This policy, together with the anti-farming CAP, aims to promote and increase the profits of the multinational monopolies and attack the incomes of small and medium-sized farmers. The report actively supports the partial review carried out on the CAP in 2003, the proposed CAP 'health check' measures and the inclusion of the agricultural economy within the framework of the EU's anti-popular Lisbon Strategy.

Overturning the EU's anti-agricultural, anti-popular policy is the only solution that will enable farmers to remain on their land. It will guarantee a decent income rather than further the aims and interests of the multinational monopolies.

- Report: Alain Hutchinson (A6-0175/2008)

Genowefa Grabowska (PSE), *in writing*. – (PL) As a member of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly I should like to congratulate Mr Hutchinson on his report, which I fully support. The workings of this Assembly, and in particular the opportunities it provides for direct contact between parliamentarians on both sides, do much to make the Union's presence felt in the most distant regions of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Assembly does not focus exclusively on a rigid plan of action. It is also capable of reacting swiftly to crisis situations and to events as they unfold. After all, the Assembly adopts resolutions and makes decisions, all of which result in mobilising material and financial Union aid. Such aid is very much needed and eagerly awaited, especially in regions affected by natural disasters.

I should like to say how pleased I am with the organisational arrangements. Meeting alternately in Europe and in countries of the ACP region in turn allows members of the Assembly to familiarise themselves with the situation on the ground and understand it better. I also support the arrangements for workshops and fact-finding and research missions associated with the Assembly. In particular, I should like to express my strong support for the idea of a forum for women as an opportunity for discussion and exchange of good practice regarding equal treatment of men and women. I believe that if the European Parliament wishes the ACP countries to perceive it as an institution promoting democracy, it cannot turn a blind eye to the injustices so often experienced by women in those regions.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) While welcoming the involvement and participation of national parliaments and parliamentarians in the negotiations on the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements

(EPAs) with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, we consider that the political position adopted with regard to these EPAs must not be restricted to the 'process', with no mention being made of their contents.

If this approach were taken, it would represent a devious attempt to draw attention away from the fundamental issue, which is that the proposed EPAs aim to establish neo-colonial relations by setting up free trade agreements. Through these agreements, the EU, the major powers and their main financial and economic groups will force these countries to open up their markets and will be able to sell their goods and services, exploit the raw materials of these countries and impose an export-oriented production model, thus removing the sovereignty of these countries and making their development dependent on the interests of the EU.

This is in the DNA of capitalism...

In terms of reaping what we sow, our capitalist intentions will lead, for the vast majority of humanity, to price increases, unemployment, poverty, hunger and so on.

As a result, we need to say no to the EPAs and to neo-colonialism.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Hutchinson report. The work that this Parliament has done over the decades together with the ACP countries is something that we as an institution can regard with some satisfaction.

Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FI) I have been a member of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly since my first term of office. Mr Hutchinson's report on the work of the Assembly in 2007 is, I believe, a comprehensive account of both the progress made over the last year and the challenges that we have faced.

I think that the fact that the standing committees will now also be responsible for following up resolutions is definitely a move in the right direction. It has provided an opportunity for far more in-depth dialogue than was previously available to them in the more formal follow-up that took place in plenary. Furthermore, the Assembly has had a key role in monitoring negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs): interaction between parliamentarians has fostered the transparency of the process and made it easier to take grass-roots issues into account.

It is because of the very nature of the work that the Parliamentary Assembly has, to my mind, become an important actor in EU development cooperation. Strengthening the parliamentary dimension and close cooperation in the follow-up process will do more and more to enable EU funds to be channelled directly to serve the needs of the people and, for example, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on health and education.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – I welcome Alain Hutchinson's report on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2007. Greater involvement of parliaments and civil society can improve and help intensify the ACP-EU relationship. It is through such cooperation that we can improve the quality of development assistance and its targeting. I therefore voted in favour of the report's recommendations.

Eoin Ryan (UEN), *in writing*. – (GA) I was very happy to support Mr Hutchinson's report last year on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). I would like to refer to some aspects of this report that really impressed me.

It is fortunate that the rapporteur referred to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). The European Union needs to keep a close watch on EPA talks and developments and the JPA has done this. As has been stated by the rapporteur, the JPAs have a central role in monitoring talks and creating links between the two sides: the EU and countries of the South.

I would also like to praise the rapporteur for the reference he made to Somalia as 'a crisis that has been forgotten'. Somalia is not alone, however, and we in the EU and the ACP are obliged to support, help and direct attention on these regions.

Above all else, however, this reports highlights the good work that has been done by the JPA, work that is sometimes not respected enough.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), *in writing*. ? (PL) The rapporteur rightly draws attention to the need to establish an appropriate framework for an open, democratic and content-based dialogue aimed at negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements between Member States of the European Union and ACP countries.

A further important aspect is increased participation of the national parliaments and societies of individual countries in order to strengthen ACP-EU cooperation. Particular importance should also be ascribed to regional cooperation and integration. Actions aimed at strengthening peace should receive strong support too, especially in those ACP countries where the political situation remains unstable.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted in favour of the report on the activities of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. I believe it is a good idea for the standing committee of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly to follow up resolutions by meeting with Commission officials responsible for the relevant areas. To date this follow-up has only taken place in plenary sessions. The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly has many tasks before it, all of which aim to promote the economic development of the ACP countries.

- Report: Gianni Pittella (A6-0185/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am voting in favour of this report, which makes another significant contribution to Europe's economic development. I therefore welcome the excellent work done by Mr Pittella, who has clearly spelled out the proposals and principles which should regulate this very important sector.

Harmonisation of the credit market constitutes another step towards an extremely important goal: the completion of a truly integrated internal market which attempts to overcome the existing legislative differences between Member States. Financial services are of general economic interest, in that they play a key role both in terms of economic development and in terms of properly implementing the Schengen objectives.

I am thinking of citizens who have huge difficulties in obtaining accurate information, and of the exit penalties – often in the form of high abandonment costs – which confront users wishing to switch from one credit institution to another.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) While there are certain positive aspects to the report adopted today, namely information on, and facilitation of, certain banking procedures for consumers, access to these services still lies within the context of a liberalised financial market where the aim, by nature, is to pursue maximum profits and not to protect consumers. That is why we abstained from voting.

It is not enough to guarantee the right to a bank account. We must ensure that fees or any other types of penalty are not charged to customers for any services, particularly where the people hardest hit would be those who are financially weak, those with accounts with limited funds and transactions or simply those who hold bank accounts.

It is essential to guarantee the public service which also exists in the financial sector, without which we will worsen social inequalities, dramatically affecting those people with fewer financial resources, social solidarity institutions and other social organisations, including small and micro-enterprises.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The Pittella report, which I supported, highlights the importance of culture, habits and languages in consumer choices and protection for financial products. The diverse cultures, habits and languages of the EU deserve respect in all areas of the Union's work and are essential if the European Institutions' work is to gain public support.

- Report: Othmar Karas (A6-0187/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the work done by the committee responsible and the rapporteur, Mr Karas, has taken our parliamentary debate a stage further and is helpful in clarifying what problems need to be tackled and resolved in this field. Furthermore, I am pleased that particular emphasis is at last being given to small operators and not just to large movements of capital.

The financial services sector does not just serve large companies operating at European or intercontinental level; it is likewise a vital tool for anyone wishing to take new ideas and ways of doing business beyond their own local market. High-level legislative action by the European Union will undoubtedly lead to greater competition and lower costs for consumers, with a positive impact on increased choice and wider access to such services by users.

Given the importance of this sector and the advantages which would stem from better legislation in this field, I am happy to see that, thanks to this report, Parliament will finally be able to put forward appropriate measures of direct benefit to consumers.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The liberalisation of retail financial services in the single market is the most recent proposal from the European Commission following on from the liberalisations set out in the Lisbon Strategy. The aim is to take another step towards achieving full liberalisation of services in the European Union.

As a result, and following on from other initiatives, the liberalisation of various retail financial services is now proposed, in particular banking products, insurance and pensions. The aim is to remove anything which might be regarded as an 'obstacle', using the old arguments of lower prices and greater choice for consumers, when experience actually shows precisely the opposite. It is the large companies which gradually increase their profits at the cost of more expensive services for consumers.

Although we are pleased at the adoption of the amendment tabled by our Group, given that a particular duty of care needs to apply to the marketing of savings and old-age pension products as the decisions that consumers take in that regard are normally decisions of great importance to them and generally taken only once in a life, the fact is that most of the report is negative. That is why we voted against it.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as the rapporteur quite rightly points out, for there to be a market, there must be supply and demand. That does not seem to be the case for a cross-border retail financial services market, however. The report is in fact based on the premise that allowing the supply is bound to encourage the demand.

Even though we all might like to benefit from cheaper credit or more profitable investments, it is unlikely that tomorrow an Italian will go to a Danish or Cypriot bank to get a loan to buy his house or his car. We all know why: linguistic problems, justified apprehension about the risks, uncertainty about the tax arrangements, etc. The rapporteur, who highlights the importance of the aspects of trust, proximity and personal relations for the consumer, is under no illusions.

This desire to artificially create such a market does not manage to conceal one of the main aims of the manoeuvre: forcing the states to harmonise their taxes and regulations so as to be prepared for all contingencies or imposing a 28th legal order, a supranational order, accompanied, for good measure, by the adoption of the euro by the countries that rejected it, thereby enabling them to participate fully in this hypothetical market.

We cannot support these proposals.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of the Karas report on retail financial services in the single market. My own country, Scotland, is home to a number of world class financial companies and they can benefit from access across the internal market. Nevertheless, respect must be had for the different financial cultures and traditions of the EU's nations and I believe that the Karas report strikes the right balance in recognising the need for subsidiarity in this area.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for the Report "The Green Card for the retail financial services on the single market", because the access of the consumers to the retail trans-border financial services represents an important factor of the reinforcement of the single market, under the conditions of insuring a high degree of protection to consumers.

With united efforts on a national and European level, it is necessary to develop consumer awareness campaigns regarding trans-border financial services.

Romania must promote consumer awareness and knowledge of the FIN-NET system, that has a key role in the coordination of information designed for the public with respect to access to legal appeal mechanisms and the alternative solutions, mainly in terms of the trans-border financial services.

Eoin Ryan (UEN), in writing. – (GA) I fully support Mr Karas' and Mr Pitella's reports in respect of their efforts to ensure that the operation of the banking sector is more effective and accessible to individual customers and small enterprises. I agree, especially, with the article in Mr Karas' report which emphasizes self-regulation instead of introducing new legislation. Legislation is not always the answer; each case must be examined and

considered carefully and the competitiveness and sustainability of each sector must be closely watched. It is often the case that something that is of benefit to the sector will also be of benefit to the customer.

I have an enormous problem with one article in Karas' report, however, in which he refers to the differences between taxation laws in various Member States. It would appear to me that this article criticizes the principle of subsidiarity and there is no truth in it. It is up to individual countries to decide their own tax bands and these bands encourage competition in the single market and not the opposite.

10. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

11. Documents received: see Minutes

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

13. Dates for next sittings: see Minutes

14. Adjournment of the session

President. – I declare the session of the European Parliament adjourned.

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