

## WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2010

IN THE CHAIR: JERZY BUZEK

*President*

### 1. Opening of the sitting

*(The sitting was opened at 09.05)*

### 2. Membership of the Delegation to the Cariforum-EC Parliamentary Committee (deadline for tabling amendments): see Minutes

### 3. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes

### 4. Preparations for the European Council meeting (17 June 2010) - Preparations for the G20 summit (26-27 June) (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the joint debate on the following:

- the statements by the Council and the Commission on preparations for the European Council meeting (17 June 2010), and
- the statement by the Commission on preparations for the G20 summit (26-27 June 2010).

**Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council.*** – (ES) Mr President, I believe that the European Council meeting on 17 June could be one of the most important in recent EU history.

It is a European Council meeting that is the culmination of a whole series of actions and measures adopted by the European Union in recent months to combat the economic crisis. These have not only been measures to combat the crisis in an immediate way with what we might call defensive measures against the most damaging effects of the crisis on the European public and private economies and on the financial system. They have also been measures that look further towards the medium and long term in order to bring us out of the crisis so that Europe can consolidate its economic position and its position in the world and the European project as a whole can therefore be strengthened, as it has been deeply affected by this crisis. Consequently, we are talking about an issue that affects the European project and not just a specific economic situation.

So, in recent months, the European Union has been adopting measures. Firstly, in order to combat the economic recession and the collapse of the financial system, it has been preparing an economic strategy for the future to bring us out of the crisis. At the same time, it has been suggesting to the Member States that there is a need for sustainable taxation and fiscal consolidation for the future. I believe that this whole series of EU measures and actions in recent months will take on a structured form at this European Council meeting on 17 June. It is a one-day meeting that is very dense in content, and the essential element will undoubtedly be the prospect of emerging from the crisis and strengthening the European Union.

For this European Council meeting, these two aspects – on the one hand, the immediate measures to protect the stability of the euro area essentially and also of some European countries, for example, the aid to Greece; on the other, there is the reflection regarding Europe's economic future and the European economic strategy for the future – which, at times, have been operating separately, have come together and definitively taken on a single form. What the European Council is proposing is an economic strategy for the next decade in Europe, combining absolutely essential fiscal consolidation and a strategy for growth and the creation of high-quality employment.

All of this is part of a strategy to come out of the crisis, which therefore has a more short-term dimension, but also a medium- and long-term dimension.

The Council's strategic approach to exiting the crisis essentially has four aspects. All of them are absolutely essential in order for the European Union and its project to emerge strongly from the crisis, and be consolidated

and strengthened by combating this devastating crisis, the like of which, of course, none of us has ever seen, and which we could almost say has not been seen in the past century.

Firstly, the European Union is clearly proposing fiscal consolidation which, in turn, will involve budgetary discipline, so there are a whole series of austerity plans in place which have been adopted by a very high percentage of European countries. These plans are also being aided by the financial stability measures implemented by the European Central Bank, which is part of the first essential element of this economic strategy to bring the European Union out of the crisis.

In this case, there is a European Commission position, and the Commission has considered the different scenarios. It is talking to each of the Member States – for example, it was doing so recently: only yesterday – about the European Union's monitoring of the adjustment plans of the different Member States and the procedures that a large majority of Member States have in place in relation to the Stability and Growth Pact: excessive deficit procedures.

We have therefore clearly established in the Council's conclusions the need for fiscal consolidation among the EU Member States and, consequently, for a fiscal sustainability strategy which, as a whole, generally goes as far as 2013. That is when the objectives laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht will have to be achieved.

At the same time, the second major aspect of the strategy is what we could describe as measures to prevent future financial crises. We know that this crisis was triggered by a financial crisis, which originally arose in the United States and showed that there was insufficient regulation of the financial markets in the United States or the European Union.

There has therefore been a concern in the Union from the start to move towards genuine regulation of the financial markets and supervision by European authorities of the functioning of financial services. This is what is expressed in various regulations that were put forward by the Commission, including during the presidency preceding the Spanish Presidency, which are currently being negotiated in this House between the Council and Parliament.

I would like to take this opportunity – as I have on several occasions – to ask Parliament on behalf of the Council to adopt a constructive approach and attitude, which it does have. This will mean that a final agreement can be achieved sooner rather than later on this financial supervision package, which is absolutely essential and would send a very clear message to the public and to the markets in the European Union at this time.

In conjunction with all of the above, there is a very important debate to be held in the Council and at the G20 meeting in Toronto: the debate on taxes on the financial system. There is the bank levy, which will be the subject of the debate, and there is also a plan for the G20 meeting in Toronto, which will be mentioned later, and even a debate on a tax on international financial transactions. All of this is part of what I call the preventive measures for the financial system: the system for financial regulation by the European Union.

There is a third dimension to this whole strategy, which is important: sustainable growth and the creation of high-quality employment. It is what we have called the Europe 2020 strategy, which is based on a very important communication from the Commission that has already been examined by the Council on several occasions, culminating in its adoption this week. In the strategy, the Council proposes that the European Union should implement all the tools at its disposal for the purpose of this growth strategy. These tools include the internal market, based on an important report produced by Mr Monti for President Barroso at his request. In short, it is about achieving something that has, to some extent, been lost in recent times in the EU: competitiveness. The 2020 strategy aims to solve the EU's competitiveness problem, and sets a few goals to that end. I hope that the five headline targets, including education and combating poverty, will be definitively quantified at this European Council meeting.

Now, the strategy has to be put into practice by each of the Member States.

Finally, the fourth fundamental element of this economic strategy that the Council is going to firmly establish as a major political and economic strategy for the next few years is what is known as the economic governance of the Union. This is a fundamental element. Governance is the specific focus of the work of the task force chaired by Mr Van Rompuy. Economic governance is also the focus of specific proposals on the subject from the Commission presented on 12 May by Commissioner Rehn, who is here today. These proposals have a fundamental objective, which is the coordination of economic policies throughout the European Union.

All of these fundamental aspects, culminating in the economic governance of the Union, represent an historic and, in our view, vital step that the Council must ratify and consolidate. It is, of course, a definite step towards economic union: not only monetary union but genuine economic union. We left the monetary union on its own years ago, but there was never really an economic union, and that is what we are talking about establishing: a real European economic union.

In addition to this vital objective, as you know, the European Council is also going to discuss other matters. For example, it is going to discuss the unitary EU approach and Europe's position in relation to the G20 in Toronto, which will be the subject of a debate later this morning here in this House. It will also discuss other issues that will be the subjects of debates in the European Council that will surely be much shorter but no less important, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

For the first time, development cooperation issues will go to a European Council meeting. This has never happened before in the history of the EU. The Council will discuss the issue of combating climate change, with a view to the Cancún conference, during this intermediary transitional period prior to the conference; it will also discuss the issue of Iran, based on a draft declaration prepared by the Foreign Affairs Council held on Monday in Luxembourg; and it will also note the progress achieved in the application of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

I would also like to say that at this European Council meeting, the start of the negotiations concerning Iceland's accession to the EU will be discussed. It will also discuss the prospect of Estonia joining the euro area, and a decision will be adopted on convening the intergovernmental conference that will adopt the draft amendment to Protocol 36 to the treaty on increasing the number of Members of the European Parliament in what remains of this parliamentary term.

*(Applause)*

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all, a word of thanks to the Spanish Presidency. The Spanish Presidency has accomplished a very difficult task at an exceptional moment in the European Union. I think it is fair to recognise their commitment and their European conviction in times of crisis. Through Minister López Garrido, I want to convey to the Spanish Government my sincere thanks for all the relevant contributions he has been making, especially during this six months, for our common European project.

Ahead of tomorrow's European Council, I would like to draw some lessons from the past few months and set out the direction that I believe the European Union needs to take.

In the last few months, we have taken decisions which would have been difficult to imagine just a few months ago. We succeeded in reinventing our economic response to meet urgent needs in a way that respects our most cherished principles: solidarity and responsibility. So we were able to bring support to our fellow Europeans in Greece, in the framework of a mechanism that contains the necessary rules and obligations. It took some time but the system is now in place. Both the system itself, and the European Union, have proved equal to the task. Moreover, we are also succeeding in designing a crisis response for the euro. This was a major effort, accomplished in a very short time and unmatched anywhere in the world. With this European mechanism and this European facility that together amount to EUR 500 billion, supplemented by EUR 250 billion from the IMF, we have ensured that we can face any further difficulty, should such a difficulty arise.

This was uncharted territory, but the European Union has been doing what is necessary to address the risks to financial stability. And, although those who like to speak loudly about Europe's problems are reluctant to admit it, this is the reality: when action is needed, provided the political will of the Member States is there, we are able to take up the challenge.

Moreover, we have not stopped at short-term stabilisation. We have embarked on a far-reaching exercise of fiscal consolidation and modernisation of our budgetary and economic surveillance. I hope the European Council will give backing to the Commission's proposals to strengthen fiscal discipline and macro-economic surveillance which, in the meantime, have been constructively discussed in the task force led by President Van Rompuy.

We have started to deliver on our Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. In other words, we are adding dynamism to the economy, for instance, through the digital agenda, in addition to the stabilisation and consolidation efforts. We are striving to avoid a decade of debt and build a generation of growth.

In fact, the potential growth of the European Union has been severely affected by the last financial crisis, so the most important priority now is growth. Growth is the answer, but not any kind of growth. We need intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. I want to underline this last point – inclusive growth, because I think it would not be fair that the most vulnerable in our societies, those who were not the cause of this crisis, will be those who have to pay much more during this crisis. For this growth to happen, we need fiscal consolidation and structural reform.

It is obvious that, without serious efforts in these areas, confidence will not come back and without confidence, we cannot have growth. So, in fact, we now have the opportunity to go further in our economic policy efforts. We have to advance on several fronts at once and this is a most important lesson to come out of this crisis. In fact, faced with the problem with monetary union, the result should not be going back on our monetary union, but should be going further in economic union. This is the important point. We need a real effort for an economic union in Europe. That is why there is a holistic approach combining several instruments: of course, fiscal consolidation and structural reform, but also sectoral reform for growth. That is why the Europe 2020 strategy places at its heart the elements of growth – intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth.

But this is not the whole programme. The programme is about growth but also in terms of structural reforms, financial reform and the new economic governance for Europe. Yesterday, during the Question Hour, I had the opportunity to discuss this issue of economic governance. I will not go into detail now but I want to say that we are committed to using this opportunity to reinforce economic governance at European level.

Tomorrow's European Council should signal to people that we have a new perspective for growth with the Europe 2020 strategy. But I believe that agreeing the strategy, including the targets – and I am happy that now, a consensus appears to have been built around the targets, including the targets of achieving a greater degree of social inclusion – is, relatively, the easier part. Where we really need to invest and work together is on the delivery, year after year. The Commission will play its full role, using all the possibilities offered by the Lisbon Treaty, and I look forward to discussing this in more detail with the European Parliament.

People also need to see that financial markets are actually being repaired and that promises are kept. We need agreement on financial supervision before the summer to back up our intentions with action, and we need a clear signal from the European Council that the Commission's forthcoming proposals on financial market regulation will be adopted by the end of 2011. It is important not to lose momentum on financial reform.

We must also show that the crisis has not dimmed our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals or our determination to lead on climate change. This Parliament has given the Commission full support for an ambitious European approach. Europe played a key role in shaping the global response to the crisis. It was the EU that pushed for the G20 to become the global forum for economic recovery.

Now we need the summit in Toronto to reinforce the message that the G20 remains committed. That does not mean that we all face the same challenges or must respond in the same way, but what we all know is that none of those problems can be effectively tackled at home without a collective response at international level.

I have explained in my letter to the European Council what should be the three key areas in Toronto.

First, to agree common principles for exit strategies in terms of fiscal consolidation. We have already done this at European level, but a global approach would help the many economies around the world facing the same challenge.

Second, the world needs to be working on developing new sources for growth, as we are advocating internally. All the major economies need to play their part to achieve the agreed objectives of strong, balanced, sustainable growth. Coordination at global level is critical for optimising growth prospects. We need both the supply and demand side, worldwide, to spur productivity and unleash the potential for growth. A strong message here would be a big boost to confidence globally, namely I think we should keep in mind that trade can be – and should be – one of the elements to spur new sources of growth.

We also need to drive forward the global agenda for financial reform and repair. 2010 is the crucial year for implementing what the G20 has already agreed, and for keeping the momentum for further reforms. This means improving both the quantity and quality of bank capital and discouraging excessive leverage, improving supervisory and crisis management processes, ensuring convergent international accounting standards, and increasing the transparency of derivative markets.

We cannot be seen to be stepping back from reforms or from ensuring that the financial sector and those who work in it are playing their full part in these efforts. This is why I will continue to call for a common framework for a bank levy at global level. It is only fair that the financial sector, where irresponsible behaviour triggered this crisis, makes a contribution to solving the crisis. As I have said before, I am personally convinced that we will also need to work on a financial transaction tax or a financial activities tax.

The situation is serious and, in fact, extremely challenging. Wages are being cut. Unemployment remains very high. The pressure on people, especially the most vulnerable, is intense. At the European Council and the G20 summit, we must show that Europe is part of the solution.

We are facing a very difficult moment – in fact, one of the most difficult moments in recent history – but, by tackling these difficulties, we are laying the foundations for a better future. Once again, we can see that a crisis can accelerate decision making when it crystallises political will. Solutions that seemed out of reach only a few years or even months ago are now possible.

As the history of European construction reminds us, it is usually in times of crisis like this that we can make progress in the European project. The reality is that Member States are now ready to accept some proposals that some years ago, or even some months ago, were simply not acceptable, and I can give you a lot of concrete examples. So, if we keep our commitment to give the facts to our citizens, to work with our Member States and to explain that we need Europe more than ever, I think this crisis can be a platform for a common European response and for a stronger Europe.

Of course, the game is not over. It is an extremely delicate moment, and that is why I would like to thank Parliament for its steadfast support for the strengthening of the Community method at this point in time. I would like especially to thank the most important political forces in Parliament that stood up and said that, more than ever, we need a European approach and the reinforcement of the Community method. We sometimes have the reflex to look for new institutions and structures when a problem emerges, but the reality is the Community method has stood the test of time because it is more adaptable than some might think.

I believe that Europeans want us to concentrate on substance. They do not want more divisive discussions about institutions or processes. They want results. This is also what the rest of the world is expecting from us. In fact, we are at a specific moment in time where Europeans, the markets and the global community are asking Europe to be better coordinated and better organised to achieve greater levels of convergence and coherence. This is why I think we need to work through the institutions that we have and use them to their full potential. This House has repeatedly emphasised the central role of the Commission. Yes, the Commission, in the areas in which the treaties give it the competence, is indeed the economic government of Europe. The Commission, which is fully accountable to the European Parliament, exercises this role in cooperation with the European Council and the Council of Ministers, in respect of their competences.

This is not only about European Union competences. We also need a better coordination on issues under national competence. It is in such a spirit of cooperation that we can help the Member States to chart the way forward. Let me be clear: this is not about a Brussels power grab. This is not a new round in the debate over the division of powers. Today's task is to add value – European value – through the vigorous, responsible and complementary exercise of our respective roles. The European Union will do it in full respect of the Community method and reinforcing a European response. You can count on the Commission to fully assume its responsibilities. We are doing our job. We count on the decisive input and support of Parliament.

*(Applause)*

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, Mr Barroso, ladies and gentlemen, people often speak of a global crisis, but the emerging markets, with an average growth of almost 10% over a number of years, are not in crisis – and good for them. In fact, they are experiencing rapid growth.

With 3% growth this year, even the United States, which – let us not forget – caused the crisis in confidence in the markets sparked off by the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, and which was the result of excessive deregulation, is on the road back to growth.

In these conditions, we need to call a spade a spade and to speak of a European crisis rather than a global crisis. This weekend's European Council must provide short- and long-term answers to the question of how we can remedy this crisis. Short-term answers involve reducing budget deficits – this is going well, and I congratulate the countries that have already done it – and also greater coordination between the Member States as regards budgetary, fiscal and social matters.

Long-term answers involve massive investments in priority sectors, namely education, training, research and innovation, and the 2020 strategy, which will be voted on by this Parliament and, I hope, ratified by the Council. I hope that this time, there will be financial coordination here, because a crisis – however negative it may be, especially for those Europeans who are fearing for their savings accounts or their jobs, and who we must reassure at any cost – can and must provide an opportunity for reconsidering the habits, behaviour and automatic reflexes that we have inherited from a time when we believed that anything was possible, regardless of the price.

Alarm bells are ringing for Europe, and everyone knows that the sound of an alarm is not always pleasant. If the Heads of State or Government, more concerned with preserving their popularity ratings than serving the general interest, are content to come out with piecemeal measures or announcements made for effect, this will have as much effect as switching off an alarm at the first ring without getting up. If, on the other hand, our leaders really take the measure of the problem and listen to the appeal by the European Parliament, the Commission and the President of the European Council to act in a cooperative and large-scale manner, we will give the 500 million European citizens new confidence in their future.

I hope that they will work in this spirit this afternoon or tomorrow, because what we are dealing with here is a crisis of confidence, the undermining of confidence by the markets – partly correctly, as we have lived beyond our means for too long, but partly incorrectly and in an irresponsibly febrile manner.

My group would ask the Member States, and their executives and parliaments, to understand that subjecting their budgets to debate prior to adopting them is a sign of European solidarity and not a crime against sovereignty. Similarly, if we have a debate among the 27 before deciding individually on the social measures we take – working hours, age of retirement – or the fiscal policy instruments we implement, this does not undermine the independence of the Member States. We cannot ask for solidarity when things are going badly – something which we are no longer able to do anyway – while refusing even to have a dialogue among ourselves on our respective public finances.

If this crisis is to teach us anything, it should be that. In summary, then: we need less of an intergovernmental approach and more of a Community approach. We are repeating this here, President-in-Office of the Council, as we believe we are talking to deaf people. We must have more of a Community approach, and we will come out of the crisis together. We also need to have less of a national and more of a European approach, and we will have more of a collective vision. This does not mean that Strasbourg or Brussels will decide everything. It quite simply means that our Member States will finally be able to make use of the European policies and reactive measures necessary to make the euro a stronger, healthier and also a more stable currency.

Ladies and gentlemen, the European project is coming to a moment of truth which requires clear answers to two simple questions. What do we actually want to do jointly? We must make a serious decision on this and do it jointly. What financial resources do we want to invest in this project, and do we want to waste these resources by everyone spending them in their own areas, or do we want to mutualise them to ensure a better result at a lower cost to the taxpayer?

The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) is waiting to see if the European Council has the courage to answer these two questions frankly.

*(Applause)*

**Martin Schulz**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the men and women who are meeting today and tomorrow in Brussels bear a huge responsibility, because Europe is now standing at a crossroads. The speculators in the international financial centres who have put their money on the failure of the euro want to win their bets. These people are completely immoral and they are not currently subject to any regulations. This is why it is high time for us to draw up regulations and put them in place. However, it will still be the case that the speculators have no moral standards.

We live in an era in which politics is controlled by people with a complete lack of morals and whose only aim is to maximise profits, regardless of the cost. We must make sure that these people lose the battle. One approach which will help to ensure that they lose and that we win is to clamp down on the current tendency for renationalisation in Europe. I am standing up in defence of the Community method, because I know that if we have a single currency, we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of 17 different national economic policies, 17 different planning strategies and 17 different investment decisions. In a single currency area, what we need is an increasingly coordinated, in-depth, common economic policy. We cannot achieve this through

the nation state. Instead, we need EU regulations in Europe. We have an institution which can do this and that is the Commission. Mr Barroso, the resolution that we are adopting today and the support that you received from the four group chairs yesterday represent a major vote of confidence in you. However, I am also expecting you to act as a strong, combative Commission President and to tell these people to put a stop to renationalisation.

We have a second task ahead of us. We must put in place a set of values as a response to the people with no morals. This is not about the maximised value of money, but about the values of solidarity, community and protection for those who cannot defend themselves. What sort of people run these rating agencies? I would like to take Spain, which currently holds the Presidency, as an example. Those same rating agencies which forced Spain to adopt an austerity package and told the country it had to save, save, save and then save some more to ensure that its ratings went up are now saying, at the very moment when Spain is putting in place its painful austerity budget, that growth levels are not adequate, because not enough money is being invested. As Spain has no growth strategy, the agencies are lowering its rating. This is a game! These are just the same immoral people who have placed their bets and who are gambling with the fate of entire countries.

*(Applause)*

We must put a stop to their game. Therefore, I am quite surprised, Mr Barroso, that you are holding back on banning naked short selling, for example. It is time that you took some action. Put a proposal on the table and you will receive majority support.

I want to explain to you why I also believe, together with fellow Members whose opinions I do not always share, that it is important to defend the Community method. The Community method is not a technique. It is a political vision. The Community method is a message. It is a message that whenever the nation state can no longer act alone, the community of states and peoples must step into the breach, in order to defend the interests of the individuals who live in these states and who make up these peoples more effectively than the nation state is able to. This Community method, which is now more than 50 years old, is responsible for the period of greatest prosperity and security and the longest period of peace in the history of Europe. However, there are still people in Europe who want to question not the post-Second World War order, but the post-First World War order. Does anyone really believe that the people who are advocating similar conflicts, who are once again making territorial claims – and there are people like this in Europe, some of them are even members of the national parliaments – would not be ready to use force without the integrative power of Europe? They would be turning the peoples of Europe against each another again if they could.

The Community method is not just a socio-political project. It is a means of maintaining peace on this continent. This is why we need it and this is why I am defending it. Social security and peace go hand in hand. There would be no peace without social security and peace is the best way of guaranteeing social security between the peoples of Europe in the long term.

*(Applause)*

**Guy Verhofstadt**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (FR) Mr President, it seems to me that today's debate is the umpteenth on the preparation of the Council and on economic governance. We must be honest with each other. There is unanimity here, as we showed yesterday with the introduction of two resolutions: one on how economic governance should be carried out, and one on how the 2020 strategy should be implemented and how to act according to the Community method.

There is a consensus here, but if we are honest, this is not currently the point of view of the Council and the Member States. The Council's conclusions will again be disappointing when we compare them with what is really needed and with the resolutions on which we have voted.

That is where the problem lies today. Here in this Chamber, and I think among the European people as well, there is a desire to create a common policy for coming out of this crisis and for carrying out economic governance, but we do not find this kind of political will within the Council and among the Member States. The reality is that there is a gulf between what we say and what people within the Council think. Such is the reality today. Mr Daul spoke of deaf people – those are not my words – the deaf people in the Council. How will they finally come to understand that, in order to come out of this crisis, we have to change our way of working?

Look at the current proposals for Europe 2020, for example. What do we have here? A continuation of the open method of coordination. This did not work for 10 years, and we are simply going to continue with the same thing: economic governance. What we are talking about is not economic governance by the Commission

or the Community method; rather, it will be the Heads of State or Government who meet four times a year to govern the European economy. This is impossible. This must be done by a European Union body; it must be done by the Commissioners. It cannot be the Heads of State or Government who meet four times a year, saying that now they will manage Europe economically in this globalised world.

We therefore have to ask, Mr President, what we must do. First, there are some things that you can do. You will be present at the start of the Council, and I hope that you will repeat the two resolutions that Parliament will be adopting, I hope, almost unanimously.

Second, we must see in what ways we can increase pressure on the Council. A large number of topics are blocked at the moment. On financial supervision, there is an enormous contradiction between the approach of Parliament and that of the Council, which does not want to hear what Parliament says. On the External Action Service, a subject I will not go into here, it is exactly the same. On the broad economic policy guidelines, the BEPGs, it is exactly the same.

President-in-Office of the Council, a large number of subjects are currently blocked because of a problem between Parliament, which wants to continue applying the Community method, and the Council, which does not want to go in this direction. At the moment, your task is to open up discussions here. I am expecting this European Council to arrive at different conclusions from the conventional ones – the four or five pages – which have been prepared.

For the first time, I want to hear that the Council is prepared to give the Commission the power to go ahead with real economic governance. I do not want to hear discussion over whether it should be with 16 or with 27. It must, of course, be with 27 and also with 16. Furthermore, with 16, it will be different than with 27, because we have a monetary union, and this monetary union also requires an economic union which we have not created and which we will not create if there are Member States which continue to monopolise this governance. This is the Commission's role.

The moment has now come, with this crisis affecting Greece and the euro, to understand this and to take a decision on this. We must transfer some of the sovereignty of the Member States to the Commission and to the European authorities. This is the decision that we are expecting from you, the Council, in the coming days.

*(Applause)*

**Rebecca Harms**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the four groups were really doing the right thing by supporting the Community method. We needed to do this, because the politicking and manoeuvring between the various states over the last few weeks and months have had the effect of repeatedly counteracting the rescue measures. Our decision has not achieved the desired results because the European Union is constantly focusing too heavily on individual interests rather than the common good.

However, I do not share Mr Verhofstadt's opinion that it is now simply a question of the European Parliament loudly stating its political will in order to determine how we achieve economic governance. I believe that Mr Juncker took a very honest approach with the group chairs last week in explaining where he believes the limits of the existing treaties to lie. Anyone who does not now speak out loudly and clearly in favour of amending the treaties cannot say that the Commission is and will be the economic government of Europe.

So, Mr Verhofstadt, let us be honest with ourselves. We know what we want. How can we achieve it? The Commission must play a central role in cooperating with the European Parliament and with the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin). As Mr Juncker has said, we must make the best possible use of the treaties and the opportunities that they present to promote the Community method. In my opinion, Ecofin should be working on the basis of the models set up by the European Commission. This can only function effectively because Europe now needs to focus on the procedure.

How can we guarantee democratic legitimacy? Mr Barroso, irrespective of how much advance praise we are now giving you and of how much confidence we currently have in you, we must work together on this question of democratic legitimacy, the inclusion of the European Parliament and the inclusion of the national parliaments. The petty dispute about the framework agreement, which has been driving me mad here week after week, makes it clear to me that you are not open to this at all. However, if we are to accept responsibility for the billions being spent on the rescue packages alone, we need democratic legitimacy for our actions at a European level.



(Applause)

If you want to continue making policy in darkened rooms, you are doomed to fail.

I would like to talk about a subject which I believe to be one of the most important in this area. If the European economic government starts to meet independently and draws up its own agenda – because, until now, the agenda and the rhythm of events have been determined by the news from the stock markets or the rating agencies – one of the major topics will be whether the route of iron austerity which has been taken almost everywhere in Europe is the only method of dealing with Europe's deficit problems. I am of the opinion that if all of us – states, citizens and companies – focus solely on saving, as a result of the uncertainty caused by the crisis, we will almost definitely be setting out on the road to recession, and I would not like to be held responsible for this. Countries like Germany, which are now in a better position because of the euro and the European Union, also need to explain how the growth part of the pact will function and what subsidy programmes we need in order to achieve what we have described in the Europe 2020 strategy.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a difficult road ahead of us. The treaties are not giving us everything we want. However, if we continue to allow the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer, even in the midst of the crisis, as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development last week indicated was the case, then I believe that we will see the terrifying scenarios that Mr Schulz has described in his speech.

(Applause)

**Timothy Kirkhope**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, there is an old story: a man is lost trying to find a railway station. He goes up to someone in the street and says, 'Where is the station?' To which the person replies, 'The route is difficult, the journey is long, so I would not start from here if I were you'.

In all these lengthy discussions about how to avoid a future euro crisis, we are diverting vital energy from the task at hand about how to get out of a current crisis. All this talk about European economic governance, new rules and regulations and further sanctions misses the rather simple and fundamental point: what about now? We have to start from where we are, now. We want the euro to continue to be a success, especially for those who have chosen to be members, but this requires action today and not grand schemes for the future.

It is obviously true, as is now recognised on all sides of this House, that there were serious weaknesses in the design of the currency, but the flaws in its design have been matched by even more serious weaknesses in implementation, which may not be solved by just drawing up new rules. After all, there was insufficient will to enforce the rules that had been put in place in the first place. There was a failure by some Member States to fulfil the commitments that they had undertaken. Yet nothing can be more dangerous for the European Union than to believe that the solutions to our problems involve more regulation, further centralised control and greater burdens. We need to get back to the real concerns of our citizens, above all, how to rebuild Europe's fragile economy.

Our economic position has suffered three grievous blows in recent years. Firstly, even before the current crisis, we were actually growing more slowly than our major trading partners. We were becoming steadily less competitive in global markets, jobs were being exported and markets undercut. We may have felt prosperous but it was a tragic illusion based largely on money borrowed both by the public sector and private households. Secondly, when the crisis came, it rocked the Western world and caused instability, forcing governments to borrow even more, and thirdly, this excessive borrowing in a number of key members of the euro area brought it to the edge of disaster. Our Member States and our citizens are drenched in debt from which it will take years to recover and most of the difficult steps needed can only be taken by Member States themselves.

The European Union can help; that is why we must not let the Europe 2020 strategy be overshadowed by more grand debates about economic governance. We welcome, Mr Barroso, your work on that strategy. The centrepiece initiative of the Commission is still work in progress but it needs to have full support not to see the mistakes of the Lisbon Strategy being repeated. Avoiding the temptation to become distracted by theoretic debates about future economic governance. We must instead focus on the enormous programme of European reform which is needed to release the creative energy and talents of our people to develop their plans and businesses, which alone can deliver the long-term economic prosperity we seek in an increasingly competitive world.

(Applause)

**Lothar Bisky**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the criticism from our group is not directed at whether we need the newly created euro rescue package, but at how it will be implemented. As in 2009, it is once more all about rescuing the banks and the financial sector. Yet again, they will not be helping to pay the cost of averting imminent crises. The EU countries that are in difficulty are once more being ordered to make cuts in social security spending, in public investments, in public services and in salaries and pensions and to increase the pension age. The plan to tighten up the stability pact is pure sado-monetarism. Workers, pensioners and the unemployed are being asked to pay for the crisis which was caused by the failure of European economic policy and gambling on the financial markets.

However, this orgy of cuts will send demand on the internal market and tax revenues in Europe through the floor and, as a result, the recession will return. From our perspective, this policy is fundamentally wrong and will not lead to healthy public finances. We are hearing once again that structural reforms should bring about increased growth. More deregulation is to be introduced into the labour markets and the European internal market, while public services will be privatised by means of public-private partnerships. As a result, industrial relations will end up in an even more uncertain and precarious position. This will cause an increase in poverty and social exclusion in the very year when we are supposed to be combating these two phenomena.

This is what the Europe 2020 strategy is allegedly intended to fight against. Where will the investment in education, research, green jobs and combating poverty come from if all the Member States are adopting austerity programmes? To put it bluntly, the Europe 2020 strategy is not worth the paper which its very modest objectives are written on.

Our group supports the protest campaigns by trade unions and social movements against the catastrophic course taken by the European Union. We agree with the European Trade Union Confederation that an EU-wide tax on financial transactions, Eurobonds, green taxes and heavy taxation of high incomes, assets and inheritances will allow for investment in the environmental and social reconstruction of our industrial societies.

Firstly, Europe needs a European social and environmental programme of investment in the future to overcome the crisis. Secondly, it needs decisive measures to break the power of the financial markets and, thirdly, it needs European economic governance and more economic democracy in the interests of the workers. We must have a social Europe or there will soon be no common Europe left.

**Nigel Farage**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, since I was last here, I have suffered some small ups and some rather dramatic downs, perhaps rather like the euro! The difference of course is that I am going to get better and looking at the faces in this Parliament today and hearing the tone of voice, I suspect that the euro's problems now may well be terminal!

The folly of your policies has already blighted the lives of tens of millions of people in Europe and it now threatens to blight hundreds of millions of people. This whole project was based, of course, on a lie, as Mr Van Rompuy has admitted. It is perfectly clear that, economically, it does not work – but, interestingly, politically it cannot work either.

Nobody ever gave consent for this project. There is clearly no such thing as a 'European identity', and why should the Germans work hard to pay for the Greeks? It simply is not going to work. Mr Barroso, the whole thing is headed in the wrong direction. Greece, Spain, Portugal – they do not fit inside this economic and monetary union, and what they actually need is help: help to break free from this economic prison of nations before we create something truly catastrophic.

Yet, what is on the table tomorrow is the proposal for yet more centralised power! The very people that have put Europe in the mess that it is in want more power for themselves. They want to compound these errors. If you go on down this route, you threaten not just the economies of southern Europe, but you threaten democracy and peace itself.

We are at a crossroads. We need to turn back. People need national control over their currencies and over their economies. This is not working!

(Applause)

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**. – (DE) Mr President, during this crisis, the less pleasant side of the European Union is sadly being revealed all too often. Taboos are being broken and EU treaties breached, while the European Central Bank is acting as a safety net for bankrupt states. At the same time, people are continuing to enthuse about egalitarianism and Europeanisation, despite the fact that the crisis has demonstrated that the differences

in the strength of the European national economies and in the national economic mentalities unfortunately cannot simply be magicked away by taking a centralist approach.

For two years, the European Union has been staggering from one catastrophe to the next. First, there was the financial crisis, then the recession and now the explosion in budget deficits. Instead of controlling the speculators, who helped to cause the financial crisis and who have deprived ordinary people of their pension pots and jobs, and instead of finally laying to rest the misguided vision of neoliberalism, there are continuing calls for more centralism. In my opinion, we no more need an EU Council dictatorship than we do a new institution in the form of a European economic government which will cost us billions.

I believe it is a very disturbing development that tax policy, minimum wages and the pension age are to be laid down by the EU, which does not even have any control over its own budget. A bank levy, transaction tax, regulations for rating agencies and increased supervision of the financial markets – all of these measures are important, but they are being introduced far too late. This makes it even more essential for the EU to act now and, if necessary, independently. It seems increasingly as if the euro is on a suicide mission in currency policy terms. In order to tackle the problem at its roots, we need to look at the option of a core European hard monetary union.

**Werner Langen (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, the summit at the end of this week is genuinely important and I am surprised that it is only lasting for one day. Given the large number of items on the agenda, it will not be possible to solve any of the problems. I would like to give my wholehearted support to Mr Barroso when he says that solidarity and responsibility are needed. However, Mr López Garrido, solidarity and responsibility also mean that Europe must not be allowed to fall back into intergovernmental cooperation which excludes the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Some of my fellow Members have referred to the Community method. We are calling on the Council in the strongest possible terms not to reverse the democratic progress that has been made over the last 30 years. We do not need a reorganisation of the euro area or separate secretariats, which some of the members of the Council are calling for. We have the Commission and the Commission is facing a challenge. If the Commission does its job, it will have our support for the regulation of the financial markets, the definition of long-term goals and the implementation of the Community method. Mr Schulz has been complaining about the lack of morality in the markets. I can only say that we should not shoot the messenger who brings the bad news. It is the responsibility of the Member States which suspended the Stability and Growth Pact five years ago. It is the responsibility of the Member States which have not followed the rules. Therefore, I would like to call for strict regulation of the financial markets. However, this should not divert us from continuing to take responsibility for our own actions.

**Stephen Hughes (S&D).** – Mr President, this week, the European Council will need to provide answers to the political, economic, environmental and social challenges we are facing at the moment, both now and over the next 10 years. We worry, however, that it will not. On immediate challenges, the Council seems likely to support the idea of accelerated fiscal consolidation and excessive tightening of the Stability and Growth Pact, as called for by Mrs Merkel and Mr Sarkozy. That will not reassure markets at a time when the US Administration is considering a new recovery plan to secure economic growth and job creation.

Europe does need to consolidate its finances, but not in a brutal and undemocratic way, a way which would undermine welfare systems, kill fragile growth and put several million more needlessly out of work. That is not what the people of Europe want, and we ask the European Council not to use this crisis to deconstruct systems of social protection or undermine our future competitiveness by cutting public spending in vital areas like research and education. There is a more socially just and economically intelligent way to bring finances under control which requires much closer cooperation between our nations within a framework of reformed economic governance and greater solidarity. But that is the only way if we do not want to make ordinary people, and especially the more vulnerable in society, pay for a crisis which they did not cause.

On longer-term challenges, the European Council should revisit the planned Europe 2020 strategy. Right now, it is incomplete, unambitious and lacks serious financial backing. There is basically no social dimension, nor an environmental one, except that some climate change elements are already agreed. Some priorities, such as research, will not be achieved because of accelerated fiscal consolidation. We are facing historic levels of unemployment, yet the strategy does not make explicit high-quality full employment as a core target; it must.

We hope that these calls will be heeded, Mr President, and that this week's European Council will not become just another missed opportunity.

**Lena Ek (ALDE).** – Mr President, today we will be voting on two historic resolutions in this Chamber, one dealing with the necessity of strengthened economic governance and a second one which is needed to make the EU 2020 resolution more ambitious: a strategy for sustainable growth and jobs.

This is the first time the European Parliament has come together in a broad coalition to support ambitious proposals as put forward in the resolutions. The large majority is clear proof of the urgency of the situation and of the leadership that can be shown in this Parliament.

Firstly, the crisis has shown that the tightening of the rules is needed more than ever for joint economic governance of the Union. The blueprint for economic governance should be drawn up by the Commission and directed and conducted by the same institution, and the resolutions provide full support for the proposals from Olli Rehn. But I must ask you, Mr Barroso, to look further into the budgetary proposals, because we need them to support the EU 2020 resolutions and the growth and stability strategy, and in their current form, they do not.

Secondly, we believe that the current crisis in the Growth and Stability Pact has shown that the Growth and Stability Pact does not work appropriately and needs strengthening, but this has to be combined with sustainable economic growth. When we look into the EU 2020 strategy, we need proposals on the flagships. Only Neelie Kroes has provided, in the digital agenda, the background that we need.

Finally, on the Council, you need to cooperate and come forward with proposals and put the citizens first and it is not ugly or insulting to ask about your neighbour's economy when the economy affects 500 million people and taxpayers.

**Philippe Lamberts (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first, cleaning up our public finances will require new receipts, as I said last time. I would like to make three points on the tax on financial transactions and the tax on banks. There is no alternative: both of them are necessary because they have different objectives.

The aim of the tax on financial transactions is to supply the public purse and to finance our obligations in terms of development aid. On the other hand, the tax on banks will enable us to create rescue funds.

I would like to say to the Council: stop dithering. I would also ask the Commission to go to Toronto, not saying 'let us study this together', but to go there saying 'we will do it together if possible, but we will only do it if necessary'.

On taxing businesses, we need a strict agenda for establishing the definition of the consolidated base, in order to then be able to implement the harmonisation of rates. Finally, I would remind you that fraud and tax evasion cost us between EUR 200 and EUR 300 billion per year. It is urgent that we recover at least half of this amount, and on this point I would say to the Council and the Commission that this is not the time for studies and excuses, but for action.

My second point concerns the regulation of the financial markets. Members of the Council, you have abused our patience. You will have to explain yourselves to the public and explain how your attitude, which involves defending narrow national interests, really relates to defending the common interest. Obviously, this cannot be shown, and so it is time that you stopped opposing the position held by this Parliament.

My third point concerns the EU 2020 strategy. Mr Barroso, I have had to hear you say the word 'growth' 47 times in your speech. You are a reasonable and rational man. I am waiting for you to demonstrate to me the link between growth and creation of jobs, between growth and increasing social cohesion and reducing poverty, between growth and the rational use of the planet's resources. What these last 20 years have shown is that, if there is a link, it is a negative one. You are therefore making an error in putting growth at the centre of the concerns of the EU 2020 strategy.

We believe that we need to pursue the following objectives: transforming our infrastructures to make them compatible with the limits of our planet, and tackling social cohesion as an objective in itself. Getting 80 million Europeans out of poverty will create lasting, sustainable and high-quality jobs in Europe.

**IN THE CHAIR: RODI KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU***Vice-President*

**Kay Swinburne (ECR).** – Madam President, in this Chamber, we are always talking about being ambitious, about many things we would like Europe to achieve. I would like to think bigger and I would like our leaders to think bigger when they attend the upcoming European Council and G20 meetings.

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs talks about failure on a global stage and the need to implement European solutions, forgetting that the EU's largest partner, the US, has gone through worse turmoil than we have. They are looking at ever more radical and innovative solutions, some of which in fact we are more or less in line with. With a few adjustments, we could come together with the US and put together resolution mechanisms for a huge proportion of the world's largest banks.

The US Fed and the UK FSA are currently discussing cross-border crisis amendment protocols and resolution mechanisms for the transatlantic financial service providers. These need to be incorporated into this Parliament's legislative reports. The proposals on transparency for derivative instruments are compatible on both sides of the Atlantic, as are capital requirements. Therefore, even bilateral agreements would be beneficial if we fail to persuade all G20 participants to follow. It seems that certain G20 members are already actively pursuing market participants in the hope of exploiting regulatory arbitrage.

We need to encourage other financial market operators to move with us rather than compete on lower regulatory regimes for financial markets. The G20 can and should work, but I encourage our representatives at these meetings to be bold.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL).** – (ES) Madam President, my parliamentary group supports the response from workers in Europe, the general strikes in Greece, in Portugal, and the forthcoming strike announced in Spain for 29 September, which coincides with the mobilisation of the European Trade Union Confederation. This is how the workers are responding to this economic model.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is not only the market – the unregulated market – and the Council that are responsible. That is definitely not the case. The main parliamentary groups are also responsible because they signed a consensus: the Brussels consensus, which was an exact copy of the Washington consensus and made us believe that Europe could be built without taking control of the economy, which is still being advocated.

That is the main problem, which puts the European social model, European democracy and European integration at risk if we think about Europe having a high level of social and territorial cohesion. That is the fundamental problem, ladies and gentlemen. It is the main political groups, and I am talking about social democracy, which is still continuing with this discourse of not intervening in the economy.

**Mario Borghesio (EFD).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, while we are discussing these various issues, there is a lively debate under way in the United States on what I consider to be a crucial question, namely, a return to the principles of the Glass-Steagall Act and the separation of ordinary banks from the speculating banks that caused the extremely serious problems for which our economies and peoples are paying a heavy price.

While solutions are being put to us here, 10 days ago, behind closed doors in the secrecy of the Bilderberg Club meetings, a large number of senior bureaucrats and European political leaders came together, probably to lay down instructions for the directives that will subsequently be presented to the European Parliament, which will have no other choice but to consider them.

Moreover, this morning I heard Mr Barroso's appeal to provide aid to our Greek friends. I would not want the aid mainly going to his friend, the shipowner Spiros Latsis. There is a clear conflict of interest here for Mr Barroso, who should account for this.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – (DE) Madam President, unfortunately, my painful illness has so far prevented me from speaking out as clearly to our international audience as I have done in the past on other European topics.

I have one minute, Mr Barroso. This is an historic period for you. As far as the financial markets are concerned, you will be measured on whether you succeed in resolving one of the most urgent issues, in other words, introducing regulations which actually close the loopholes. As things currently stand, everything that we hear from the Commission and that has so far been said in Parliament does not preclude that from happening. If none of the necessary improvements are made, you will go down in history as someone who watched the

house burning down and made no attempt to find anything to put the fire out or even any new building materials.

My second point concerns capital. If you do not succeed in abolishing this disastrous, devastating system of conduit banks, rather than just keeping it in check, you will be depriving the real economy and billions of people throughout the world not only of their own economic basis for action, but also their confidence in everything which we call democracy. This will mean that China and the totalitarian states, which are making sure that their banks are under control, will suddenly be in a better position than the European Union.

My third point is that, of course, we need a system which keeps systemic risks to a minimum. The 'too big to fail' issue can be resolved with progressive tax regulations which will require a bank simply to close when it gets too big.

**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, one thing is for sure: no part of this crisis and none of the crises of the last 60 years were down to there being too much Europe. No crisis is down to too much Europe. Even if there is a problem here – and we all agree that there is – it is that we need more Europe, that we have too little Europe. The most obvious contradiction is that on the one hand, the States are asking for the support of our institutions, while on the other, they want to reclaim their sovereignty.

This leads us to the second contradiction. Mr Verhofstadt bitterly criticised the Council in this regard, and said that sovereignty needs to be transferred. We should, however, bear a small detail in mind: it is not the States that transfer sovereignty, but the peoples. Today, if we asked these peoples whether they were prepared to transfer all their sovereignty in economic matters to the European institutions, I am not sure how many of them would reply in the affirmative, since it is also the case that these are the same peoples whose electoral turnout in the European elections is 30%, and who are very mistrustful of our political project.

Therefore, realistically what can we do? Realistically, how can we contribute? I believe that the Commission is on the right path. The Commission should ask the governments to make a joint, but also selective commitment, that is, to earmark a share of their own budgets and the Union's budgets and thus make a tangible contribution towards ensuring that we emerge from the crisis.

**Marita Ulvskog (S&D).** – (SV) Madam President, Mr Schulz said that what is on the agenda at the meetings ahead of us is actually morality and solidarity. I totally agree with this. The question is: can we rely on those sitting around those meeting tables to actually promote morality and solidarity? I have serious doubts about that. We must not forget how this crisis was triggered. It was the market fundamentalists in the parties on the political right that are in power in many of our Member States and that are strong in this Parliament, the Commission and the Council who advocated an unregulated market. They worshipped it and they defended it.

They are also the ones who have been the poorest at fulfilling the EU's Stability and Growth Pact. They have large deficits and have been lax in keeping their economies in order. Nearly all of the EU's Member States have done this. The largest have been the worst and they also have conservative governments.

Who is paying the price now? It is the workers, the pensioners and the young people who cannot get a job. I am not sure that the result of these meetings, despite all the fine words, will lead to an approach to savings that will not mean that we immediately put ourselves in a situation where the recovery is ruined, but instead will mean that we are wise and think in terms of long-term results and of solidarity and that we also invest in something that will produce sustained growth. I will be watching closely to see if these fine words are actually put into effect.

**Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE).** – (FR) Madam President, the next Council will take place at a time of crisis which is worrying and destabilising our fellow citizens. Austerity plans are proliferating in a confused manner in the Member States, and those in charge are losing themselves in vain semantic quarrels.

Well, we really have to get away from all this. We will not re-establish confidence without budgetary and economic coordination at European Union level. This is obvious, and it is urgent. It is therefore down to the Commission to exercise its right of initiative fully. For my part, I would like it to put forward some proposals.

The first is to set up a permanent European monetary fund and a European bond market. The second is the coordination, as you have said, of the Member States' budgets, with two objectives in mind: aiming for balanced public finances, but also creating synergy between the investments necessary for the future. In addition, we need the creation, at European level, of a tax on financial institutions so that the taxpayer does not have to finance the banks any longer, the medium-term harmonisation of our fiscal legislation –

particularly legislation that is a burden on companies – and, finally, a more significant European budget with its own resources.

I would like to say a few words on penalties. In my opinion, we should not be talking about adding to them; rather, we should be talking about applying them. Accordingly, I would propose a very simple rule to the Commission: that from now on, it should publish all the written commitments that it receives from those in power. I am sure that this will be a useful way of taking the debate forward, at least in some of the Member States.

**Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR).** – (PL) On the order of business for tomorrow's European Council meeting, place has been found once again for a discussion of the Commission's Europe 2020 strategy. The Council will also give consideration to a competing project called 'Europe 2030: Challenges and Opportunities', prepared by the Reflection Group or the 'group of wise men'.

The European Parliament has many times made known its reservations about the objectives and means for realisation of the 2020 strategy. I, personally, have drawn the attention of the Commission to the fact that the programme must not lead to a reduction in the financial resources designated to the new Member States, including Poland. The Europe 2030 document of the 'wise men' has not yet been presented to our Parliament. I think the voice of the Members of the European Parliament should have more significance than the opinion of an informal group, especially in view of the fact that the group remains outside any control and has no democratic mandate.

In light of the great abundance of projects on Europe, such as 2020 and 2030, I propose that our Parliament should not be left out and should develop its own strategy – Europe 2050.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Madam President, Mr Barroso, Mr López Garrido, I have listened to you yesterday and today babbling on about smart and sustainable development. Mr López, I have listened to you talk about an historic step. I get the impression that you have lost your sense of European social reality or that you are consciously indifferent to it.

In the name of financial discipline and competitiveness, austerity programmes have taken the form of an epidemic, from Ireland, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal to Germany; programmes which, in a holy alliance with the International Monetary Fund, are anti-economic, anti-social and anti-growth.

In Greece, this means that the basic pension will drop to EUR 360, redundancies will be triggered and wages in the public and private sectors will fall by 30%. For all these people, Mr Barroso, Mr López, the workers who are losing their rights, the pensioners who are suffering the crisis, the unemployed in Europe who now number 10%, the poor, whom you have forgotten – and in the Year of Combating Poverty no less – historic steps are probably being taken, but they are historic steps backwards.

**Niki Tzavela (EFD).** – (EL) Madam President, at the risk of becoming tiresome, I would like, with all due respect, to come back to the proposal I made yesterday about a new economic development initiative, *European Mega-Projects*, separate from the major trans-European networks and separate from PPP projects. Would you consider the question of issuing eurobonds just to cover major European projects?

We are certain that the global market would respond very well to this initiative. It is a development issue and I would be obliged if you would consider it. I mentioned it yesterday and you reacted negatively, but I believe that it would be constructive to reconsider the matter.

**Andrew Henry William Brons (NI).** – Madam President, the agenda talks of a new strategy for jobs and growth – by which they mean loss of jobs and negative growth! GDP fell by 4% in 2009, and 10% of the workforce – 23 million people – are unemployed. What will be the European Council's remedy? More immigration! Look at the European pact on asylum and immigration, which features on the agenda. If you believe that our problems will pass with the current crisis, think again. As they admit, competition from emerging economies is intensifying.

What will be the European Council's strategy to deal with this? More globalisation, open the door to more goods from the emerging Third World economies, export jobs by off-shore employment. The countries of Europe can only compete with the goods, services and employees of the Third World and emerging economies if our wage rates fall to their level – and do not think innovations in capital and techniques will save us. Our innovations of today will belong to the world the day after tomorrow. Globalisation spells poverty for the nations of Europe.

**Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE).** – (NL) Madam President, I should like to compliment the Commission on the proposals it has presented – those of Commissioners Rehn and Barnier – and the direction it has chosen, as the financial markets are still putting the European Union's decisiveness to the test. To the Council, I would say that Parliament will be challenging it to really take the decisions necessary to strengthen European economic governance, as this is something we are concerned about.

Look at the Council's position on European financial supervision. It needs to show much greater willingness to meet Parliament halfway. We are willing to reach compromises. I call on the Council to go to the summit and demand the commitment of the Heads of State or Government. After all, if it does not make a move, we shall lose precious time and may struggle to actually get the supervisory authorities working by 1 January.

In today's vote, Parliament will be showing broad support for two important resolutions. We want to see a key role for the European Commission, more of the Community method and a strengthening of the Stability and Growth Pact, which fortunately the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, too, now means to support; something that is of great importance at this difficult time. I would say to both the Council and the Commission that we also call on you to take the institutional role of this House, our democratic role, more seriously and to also involve it in this process.

**Udo Bullmann (S&D).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to ask you to pass on a message to the other members of the Council. The time for the policy of excuses is over. It is important that you do not decide tomorrow that Parliament should adopt the supervisory package and the hedge funds package more quickly as part of the regulation of the financial markets, while the Council – and I do not mean you personally, Mr López Garrido, but I want to encourage you to help us – simultaneously puts on the brakes and prevents us from finding solutions.

The triologue of the Council, the Commission and Parliament is meeting in this House at the same time to discuss the issue of regulating hedge funds. We have proposed appropriate regulations, which prevent the finance industry from gobbling up industrial firms using speculative funds and bringing the real economy to its knees. However, the Council is blocking these regulations. Please tell the Heads of State or Government that the time for the policy of excuses is long gone. It is no longer acceptable for them to give big speeches at home about the regulations that Europe can introduce and then to chicken out when their officials begin working at a European level. The time for this is past and we can no longer afford to behave in this way in the context of the economic crisis.

I would like to ask you the same question, Mr Barroso. It does not matter whether you are mentioning the word 'growth' here for the 49th, 52nd or 64th time. It is much more important for you to explain why it is that, as the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin) stated the day before yesterday, the Member States of the European Union will have to make huge cuts amounting to 3.5% of their gross national product, but you are not telling us how you will use this money to prevent a dreadful catastrophe on the labour market. In this situation, we must learn to grow together. However, you need to explain how this will happen. Otherwise, the Europe 2020 strategy will not be worth the paper it is written on. We need real answers instead of fictitious answers and excuses in order to ensure that the institutions which you represent are part of the solution and not part of the problem.

**Adina-Ioana Vălean (ALDE).** – Madam President, at this stage we can agree that the intergovernmental method has shown its limits. We must be more ambitious and courageous and set up real joint economic governance. Economic coordination – in order to achieve an economic pillar alongside a monetary one – and, ultimately, a genuine economic union are important. Nevertheless, this should not mean setting up unnecessary burdens and regulation; but it should entail more competition for organisations and innovation.

Solidarity has to prevail and should not remain a vain word for Member States in difficulties. There is no reason why those who applied austerity plans for years and are doing well should always pay for the mistakes of the others. This is why we have to put in place efficient sanction mechanisms, more scrutiny of national budgets by the EU and tighter rules for the Stability and Growth Pact.

The EU 2020 strategy should mark a turn in EU policy and cannot remain just another target or a future failure. I would like especially to praise Commissioner Kroes, who did an excellent job outlining a coherent strategy for the digital agenda. I believe that the ICT sector contains massive economic potential and gains. At a time when we want to relaunch the EU single market, the ICT could pave the way, provided that we focus on encouraging competition by balanced regulation of the market.



Tomorrow, it will be up to the Member States to face their responsibilities and to take an ambitious stand. To put it succinctly: time is running out.

**Zbigniew Ziobro (ECR).** – (PL) Madam President, the free market is something which is of great value. When there are insufficient regulations to guarantee its proper functioning, and there are no institutions which safeguard these regulations, a problem arises and a crisis inevitably follows. This can be seen clearly, today, in Europe. It can also be seen at world level in the banking sector, where just such regulations and a sense of responsibility were missing. For the free market to function well, it is essential to have institutions which safeguard fundamental principles as well as the trust which has to be the key to operating in the world of business and commerce. Without it, unfortunately, the effects will be deplorable.

As for the 2020 strategy, it is worth noting that to date, no analysis has been made of the failure of the Lisbon Strategy, which was adopted with a great fanfare 10 years ago. Now, without reflection, we are adopting a new strategy. This is a mistake. I think such an analysis should be made, so that the 2020 strategy does not see a repeat of the series of unsuccessful experiments seen by the Lisbon Strategy, which many greeted with huge hopes for a great European success. More regulations, more responsibility and the opportunity for trust as part of the operation of the free market – this is what Europe needs today.

**Jaroslav Paška (EFD).** – (SK) We are debating the way out of the relatively complex economic and financial situation in Europe. We are looking for culprits in the banks and rating agencies. I am not saying that they did not contribute to our current problem, but let us take a look at ourselves – whether we have not contributed to this situation through accepting the long-term deficits of states and their high levels of debt.

Responsible budget management is only the first measure we must put in place. We must also look at the structure of our society. We have a very complex system of public administration in Europe. The business environment is organised in a very complicated way, with many regional variations and cross-border barriers. Entrepreneurship is smothered by a bureaucracy that long ago exceeded the bounds of common sense in terms of its reach and size. We must try to reduce the administrative burden and support creative individuals who want to make a living through business and to bring employment to their fellow citizens. That is the only way out of the current situation in Europe.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, Mr Barroso, Minister, there is an important person missing today: Mr Van Rompuy. We are not preparing for a meeting of the Council; we are preparing for a meeting of the European Council. I will never get used to the fact that it is the Council. This is nothing against you, Minister; the fact is that Mr Van Rompuy is really missing out on the opportunity of a political alliance with Parliament, because he is making a minimal contribution in every area.

President of the European Commission, I would like to ask you what makes you say that this EU 2020 strategy will work when the Lisbon Strategy failed. We agree with the ambitions and objectives, but the means are not there. Therefore, we would like to make some proposals to you. We think that the time has come to establish a financial, political and economic alliance with the Member States on functioning and investment.

On functioning, we must have, with the Member States, a policy for coordinating public spending relating to European affairs. On defence – we have 27 armies, but no enemies; on energy and research, we have no consistency; on the internal market, we have 27 national regulators, but no ambition; we have 27 diplomacies and hundreds of buildings abroad; and we have a customs terminal and 27 customs administrations.

On investment, now: the Union is not investing enough. We must draw up a EUR 1 trillion investment plan for high-speed trains, rivers, energy, water, space, education and health. The Member States must increase the capital of the European Investment Bank to EUR 230 billion, and we must take around EUR 30 billion from our budget to allocate to part of the European Union's investment. The time has come to have, with the national parliaments, a European budgetary spring in which we have an economic and financial debate on a continental scale.

**Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D).** – (ES) Madam President, this is an important debate preparing for the European Council and participation in the G20 in Toronto, with a very ambitious agenda involving recovering from the crisis, the specific agenda for the G20 on economic governance of globalisation, and the response to the Millennium Development Goals and climate change.

There is only time in a minute and a half for me to focus on one goal, which is the social dimension of the crisis: the impact on employment and the destruction of the millions of jobs following the crisis. These things also require a response.

I therefore join with those who have expressed not so much concern but dismay at the emphasis that has dominated the agenda recently on restoring convergence and stability, neglecting or ignoring the strategy for growth and employment.

Therefore, let the focus be on people; in terms of restoring employment and decent work, fighting poverty, high-quality jobs and restoring a culture of duties and responsibilities. This depends on the Council and the G20 summit and, in particular, on the idea of inclusive growth and green, sustainable growth. This is because it concerns the specification of the proposals aimed at changing our production, consumption and transport patterns in order to 'decarbonise' our economy.

The G20 will undoubtedly discuss budgetary coordination and penalties, but we also cannot lose sight of the fact that the European Union has a message to deliver on fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, and therefore on the social dimension of globalisation, because this is the first crisis of globalisation and in globalisation.

**Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, the meeting of the European Union Council is taking place at a crucial moment and is of fundamental significance. We need profound reform of the system of governance at the level of a Union of 27 Member States, and not only at the level of the 16 members of the euro area. We are united by much more than a common currency. We need to strengthen economic governance in the Union. A key word here is to make economic policy Community-oriented, by which I mean strengthening the role of the European Commission in economic coordination when making ex ante analyses of national budgets and the role of the European Parliament in the area of the democratic control of European economic governance.

We must avoid the division of Europe into an elite club of the euro area and the rest by maintaining the economic integration of the 27 countries. We must not allow ourselves to have a two-speed Europe. The countries which remain outside the euro area but which intend to join it have, for the most part, healthier public finances and greater potential for economic growth. They can make a significant contribution to the economic development of the entire Union. I would like to remind everyone that in the worst days of the crisis, Poland was the only island of prosperity on a red map of Europe – at the time, it was the only country which recorded economic growth.

We should learn from the deficiencies of the current Stability and Growth Pact. The system of sanctions, which amounts only to shaming certain countries, simply does not work. We need a system of sanctions which will be effective and just for all countries, and we also need a strengthening of the preventative action of the pact. The solution is that we have to get out by going on. In the face of the crisis, we need more Europe.

**David-Maria Sassoli (S&D).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the crisis is deep and Europeans are asking us for one thing: to put politics back in charge of the economy. This is the responsibility that we must take on by revitalising the Community method, safeguarding our currency and promoting measures to protect our citizens and provide employment. Making the financial markets accountable is a moral, but also a political duty for us, and Europe must speak with one voice at the forthcoming G20 summit.

This is a problem that you, Mr Barroso, must address. Your Commission must endeavour to keep the governments at arm's length and convince them that no one will emerge from the crisis on their own. United, Europe will win, or divided, it will fall. You must be like an orchestra conductor, Mr Barroso, making all the musicians play the same tune.

What should the music score contain though? Firstly, regulation of the financial markets and the rating agencies, economic governance of the euro area, taxation of all financial transactions and investments for growth, and not just budget cuts. A striking example was your Commission's positive opinion, according to the Italian Government, of Italy's financial package, a package that will bring the local authorities to their knees. No one has ever achieved growth on the basis of budget cuts alone and today, what we need is growth.

**Paulo Rangel (PPE).** – (PT) Madam President, first of all, along the lines of what Mr Daul and Mr Langen have said, I would like to say that it is essential to have economic governance of the Union, but this economic governance must be centred in the Commission. That is the first point I would like to emphasise. That said, we cannot just focus our debate on immediate issues, as has been the case here all morning; we must also focus on the issues included in the EU 2020 strategy. I would particularly highlight the issue of education and training for younger people, and the issue of innovation, research and development.

That is because those are the key areas that will enable Europe to compete in the global arena. Unfortunately, I have to say that the European model of education has failed, and it has failed because it is now less demanding and less strict than the models found in emerging countries like India, China or Brazil. Therefore, in view of the challenge posed by this idea of innovation, development, research and education, I am also calling for European education systems to be strict and demanding. It is only by being strict and demanding that we will prepare our young people to compete in the global market. We cannot just think about the crisis this year or in the next two or three years. We have to think about the strategy for Europe for the next 10 to 20 years, and that depends on having an education system that is strict and demanding.

**Edite Estrela (S&D).** – (PT) This crisis is the result of too much liberalism and has put an end to the illusion that democracy and the market could solve all the world's problems.

The question that the next Council must answer is this: has the European Union done everything it should have done and at the right time? I hope the Council has the courage to make the decisions that the people expect. Fine words are not enough; we need good decisions. What is the use of talking about supervision, regulation and sustainable growth if we do not get rid of tax havens and the casino economy? Good intentions are not enough; we need results. The EU 2020 strategy will be of little use if there is no real economic governance of the Union. The future of the Union is in our hands. It cannot be dependent on credit ratings issued by agencies that serve the interests of speculators. The Union is an extraordinary instrument, but we have not known how to make proper, thorough use of it.

**Marietta Giannakou (PPE).** – (EL) Madam President, the dilemma persists. While Europe needs strong governments in order to move forward, economic globalisation needs weak governments in order to get by. The 2020 strategy for employment and growth is certainly one instrument for investment in education, knowledge and excellence and, at the same time, for combating poverty and social exclusion.

None of this is possible unless the Community method is strengthened, and that requires solidarity and coordination between the European institutions, something that has been lacking in recent years. Instead of crises being prevented, they are dealt with after the event, often with little success.

The G20 summit is also important if the Union attends with specific positions on long-term financial supervision both inside and outside the European Union. Economic governance is a political question and, as such, requires a sustained effort over a period of time by numerous responsible parties, even if the results are insignificant.

The question is this: are the European institutions prepared to exercise a long-term policy and to abandon the philosophy of knee-jerk reaction and take a longer-term view? That is the only way to address the problems, bearing in mind that the fifty years of prosperity that we experienced after the war may not return, bearing in mind the competitive stance which countries are already taking, as was said earlier, especially in education and excellence, such as India, Brazil and even China.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** – (HU) Two years after the outbreak of the crisis, economic growth has started, albeit slowly. The situation continues, however, to be extremely fragile. Dealing with the enormous state budget deficits and indebtedness of Member States demands extremely disciplined budgetary policies and savings everywhere. There is no room for various populist promises. We need to maintain and indeed to reduce the deficit everywhere. It is a great challenge to make sure that the poor and vulnerable do not end up in a hopeless situation as a result of the cutbacks. It is important to guarantee that no other country can follow the example of Greece in the future.

It is good that Mr José Manuel Barroso and Mr Olli Rehn warned those who, by falsifying the data on the actual situation, envisioned a Greek bankruptcy and played with fire. This is why it is crucial for Member States' draft budgets to be submitted in advance to the Commission for review. It is regrettable that the United Kingdom is not a party to this. Furthermore, significant steps are needed to bring about a true economic union, as well. This requires, on the one hand, a much more effective harmonisation of the economic policies of Member States. Only Community solutions can lead the European Union out of the crisis; national egoism and introversion only aggravate the problems.

**Ernst Strasser (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, many of the previous speakers have dealt with the issue of the financial and deficit crisis. I would like to talk about the Council's conclusions on the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. Mrs Reding and Mrs Malmström have proposed a broad package of measures in this area which deserves our support. The objectives of this package are to allow immigration, but in such a way that the people who come here have the chance to work and do not take jobs away from the people

who already live here, to offer asylum to the people who really need it quickly and without red tape and to put firm measures in place to prevent illegal immigration and abuses of the asylum system. It is clear from these objectives that we need a coordinated European labour migration policy which gives the Member States the right of codecision on the basis of their social and integrative capacity. We need a European asylum package that brings together the asylum legislation of the countries and improves the quality and efficiency of the process. We need more effective protection for our external borders, accompanied by a stronger role for the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex) and the visa information system. We need a functioning repatriation policy which allows for the readmission agreements to be applied and we need visa facilitation, but only once the objectives have been laid down. This applies to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, as well as to Russia and Turkey.

**Michael Cashman (S&D).** – Madam President, can I just say in relation to migration flows that you will never solve the problem of migration flows or have a strong enough border unless you deal with the causes why people feel they have no option but to leave the countries in which they live, often in the most appalling circumstances. That is why at the G20, there must be absolute determination to address the issue of poverty, torture and the denial of basic rights, such as the right to food, the right to water, the right to education and the right to sanitation.

Yesterday in this House, we passed, by a considerable majority, my report on the Millennium Development Goals and the mid-term review. What is clear is that the G20 must maintain their commitments on financing the 0.7% which has been agreed. Now is not the time to back away. There needs to be an international financial tax to bring additionality to deal with the whole issue of mitigating the effects of climate change, which have enormous impacts on migratory flows, on food security issues. So there must be agreement among the G20. Failure to agree means that we will lose our moral and legal authority.

**Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE).** – (LV) Madam President, we know that in times of crisis, various solutions are both possible and necessary at the family level. Those families, for example, whose income has fallen below their expenditure, that is, rather, whose income is falling below their expenditure, must reduce their expenditure. For those families, however, whose income has not fallen, it is probably unnecessary to reduce expenditure. The same applies to the Member States too. In times of crisis, there is no one solution that fits all. It is essential, for example, for those countries that have been hardest hit by the crisis, such as the Baltic States, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland, to cut back their budget expenditure. It is quite possible, however, that in the case of other Member States, such as Germany and Poland, which have not been so hard hit by the crisis, this is not the correct solution, and that they should rather concentrate on growth, for we also need growth in Europe. In order to achieve different solutions in different countries in Europe, we need a single central coordinator. Quite naturally, that coordinator is the European Commission. We do not need a new, superfluous bureaucracy, we must avoid mutual competition between Member States, and we have to reinforce existing structures. Let us increase the Commission's powers, so that it can act as this economic coordinator on behalf of all of us. Thank you.

**José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil (PPE).** – (ES) Madam President, I am going to keep to my time limit and be very specific. I am going to tell the Council and the Commission exactly what they need to do in a week's time if they want an agreement on the financial package.

The major premise is that the future is looking brighter than it was a while ago, but there are still some clouds on the horizon. According to the International Monetary Fund, USD 800 billion are owed in losses not disclosed by the banks, and the international bank has lent USD 2.2 billion to southern economies that are at risk.

The reform of the financial markets needs to happen now, because what is important is not that there might be a crisis – which there might be – but that we have put the measures in place to navigate it.

The second premise is that there are significant disagreements between the Council and Parliament with regard to the European supervision package. Parliament wants the entities that could cause the system to collapse and endanger the real economy to be supervised more strictly by a genuinely European authority. That is economic governance.

We also want mechanisms to be established now to remodel the entities that could cause the whole system to collapse. This is not about rescuing them, but about remodelling them and, if necessary, liquidating them without spreading the infection or rescuing them as a result, as it is always the same people who pay for this.

Thirdly, the 'polluter pays' principle requires the sector to establish a fund to pay the costs of the crisis. The Council has a week to do what the Larosière report said and to reach an agreement in Parliament; if not, the rotating Presidency of the Council will be entirely responsible.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** – Madam President, I would like to make three points. Firstly, the great majority of this Parliament and the Commission are united in stressing the enforcement of the Community method. I support this approach, but we should be aware that it is the Commission that has to perform economic governance, not necessarily the Council. Before starting new institutions, we need first to strengthen the existing ones. The Commission needs to have a stronger mandate to efficiently coordinate fiscal consolidation, with the authority to issue warnings to those who violate the rules.

Secondly, the crisis provides also for opportunities, for example, completion of the internal common market. I shall stress especially the European Digital Agenda, which is an important part of the Europe 2020 strategy. It should become an instrument to boost an efficiently functioning, common digital market for products and services, reducing horizontal obstacles of bureaucracy and communication.

Thirdly, the eurozone. A credible and stable euro is a core not only of the eurozone of 16; it is a core of the Union as a whole. The present crisis should not lead to splitting Europe into two separate spheres but, on the contrary, should consolidate it around common economic and spiritual values. Estonia's joining the eurozone at a time of turmoil is a demonstration of confidence in the euro's future. This is the time to ask, 'What can we do to strengthen Europe?' not 'What can Europe do for us?' Estonia will join the euro club with full awareness that it will take co-responsibility for its cohesion and will make our proportional contribution to the fund on financial stabilisation.

#### IN THE CHAIR: ROBERTA ANGELILLI

*Vice-President*

**András Gyürk (PPE).** – (HU) In addition to the question of international financial regulation, the agenda of the G20 summit will also include global climate change and, as a related matter, the carbon tax as well. The European Commission is itself devoting increasing attention to introducing this tax in the European Union, and the accident at the BP drilling rig is giving even greater impetus to the debates on the subject. It is therefore worth formulating a few basic principles. First, as regards carbon tax, we must not forget that there are already market-based climate protection tools in place, one of which is the EU's emissions trading system. The introduction of any type of tax on emissions can be considered only in those sectors that do not yet participate in the ETS systems that cover an increasing range of sectors. We must avoid imposing multiple, repeated taxation. Secondly, the carbon tax cannot be a purely income-generating tool intended to help governments reduce their budget deficits. Its introduction can only be supported if it is accompanied by significant environmental advantages, and if it does not place too great a burden on the population or on European industry. Thirdly and finally, the primary condition for introducing a carbon tax at Community level is that other developed industrial nations should act likewise. It is precisely for this reason that, like in the case of global financial regulation, the basic legal framework must be laid down in this respect, as well. The G20 summit may provide the appropriate opportunity to do so.

**Othmar Karas (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, Mr Barroso, Mr López Garrido, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, I would like to ask you to make a clear commitment to Europe as a community at the summit and to reject the proposals for a new intergovernmentalism, which come, in particular, from Germany and France. Secondly, I would like to call on the Commission to play a credible role in leading the debate on the creation of an economic, employment and social union. If we do not aim to establish a United States of Europe in political terms, we will fall behind the global competition. The fragmentation of the continent, the demographic changes and the lack of economic and socio-political expertise in the EU represent our greatest weaknesses when it comes to combating this crisis. My third point concerns the Council once again. The Europe 2020 strategy is not complete. You must call on the Commission to combine the exit strategy, the strategy for growth and jobs and the Monti package and to present us with a project for growth and employment.

**Jutta Steinruck (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, of course we need economic governance and, of course, the Member States must consolidate and restructure their budgets. However, what we are now seeing is a radical reduction in the social budget. Unemployment and poverty are increasing and people do not understand why banks and companies are receiving support while the politicians simply pay lip service to combating poverty and unemployment and put in place objectives that cannot be monitored.

This is why the Europe 2020 strategy and the integrated guidelines are so important. We want to continue striving for the goal of full employment and we want proper work, not vulnerable jobs. When it comes to combating poverty, our goals really must be more ambitious. This is why we are calling on the Council to take up the Commission's proposal to reduce poverty in Europe by 25%. The European Parliament has specific objectives and it is important for Parliament to be taken seriously.

**Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE).** – Madam President, at tomorrow's meeting of the Council, I would urge the European leaders to agree to commence accession negotiations with Iceland. I am hopeful of a positive outcome and that Member States will not allow the Icesave issue to delay the beginning of the process. In July 2009, Iceland presented its application. In February 2010, the Commission responded by giving a favourable opinion. As a result of its EEA membership, Iceland has already completed 22 of the 35 accession chapters of negotiations. The remaining issues and chapters to be concluded relate to agriculture, fish, structural funds, external relations, regional policy and budgetary matters.

Should the EU leaders provide the green light tomorrow, I know that the negotiations will be tough. However, I am confident that the other 13 chapters will be dealt with in a positive manner by both sides. I would again urge the European Council tomorrow to give approval to proceed with negotiations.

**Franz Obermayr (NI).** – (DE) Madam President, the citizens of Europe expect the EU to have a strong international presence at the summit in Toronto and to come up with clear results, such as restrictions on derivative products and hedge funds, a bank levy for large banks based on the balance sheet total, for example, and clear limits on the exorbitant bonuses paid to managers. We must keep speculation with other people's capital to a minimum and we must focus on the rating agencies. We need a neutral, independent control mechanism. In addition, the issue of liability in the case of false valuations must be clarified. Canada, Japan and Brazil have already spoken out openly against a bank levy. That is not surprising, because their banks did not need to be rescued with packages costing billions.

It is also important to me to make clear to you how short-sighted this approach is. We will not be able to get away without regulating the financial markets. Those people who have profited for years from risky speculation must be reminded of their obligations. We cannot simply ask citizens to take responsibility for the negative consequences of these people's actions.

**Andrzej Grzyb (PPE).** – (PL) Mr Barroso, it seems to me that all Member States should be included in this process of combating the crisis, and the Community method, which we talk so much about, is of value here, and we should not be establishing new entities or new institutions.

The European Commission has a full mandate to become the authority which will coordinate policy for combating the crisis. At the same time, we should also point out that this enhanced method of coordination ought also to bear fruit in the form of solutions which do not bring in too much legislation. Yesterday, we had such an example, when we wanted to include businesspeople in the same system as the employees of transport firms. Such solutions do not help consolidate emergence from the crisis.

I also want to draw attention to subsidiarity and inclusion of the national parliaments of Member States in the debate, so that they will feel jointly responsible for the process of bringing the entire European Union out of the crisis.

**Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D).** – (SK) Much has already been said in the debate today, so I will try to restrict myself to just a few issues, as I only have one minute.

We all agree with regulations, we all agree that it is our duty to adopt proposals which should limit financial speculation and submit the financial sector to greater overall control. It is also true, however, that, prior to the preparation of the last G20 summit, we spoke very clearly here about how we would combat tax havens, or countries offering tax havens. Nothing has been done in this area.

I would also like to mention another issue, which is the International Monetary Fund. We want to give the IMF enormous scope of operations, and we want to give it powers, as if we have forgotten that this institution, despite its huge resources, failed to foresee the crisis which engulfed the European Union, and failed to defend our economies from the crisis, and yet today, we want to give it an even wider scope of operations.

I would finally like to talk about the fact that we must strengthen cooperation in Parliament and in the institutions, we must harmonise tax policies and we must harmonise social policies. Without this, Europe will not get out of the crisis.

**Constance Le Grip (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, Europe has often made progress as a result of the crises that have confronted it, and this is what has been happening very recently. That said, even if Europe was able to react – a little late, it is true – it is no less true that the sovereign debt crisis has brutally revealed the fact that we lack real economic coordination at European level, as well as revealing the price that we are paying for the absence of real economic and budgetary coordination in Europe.

The debate on the need for such coordination of our economic and budgetary policies, long before any draft national budgets are drawn up in the Member States, must therefore take place, in my opinion, within the economic and monetary union – not exclusively, of course, but in the first instance.

Economic and monetary union – that is, the fact that we have a common currency – confers on us, of course, an increased responsibility and solidarity. So no, there will be no two-speed Europe or two-tier Europe, but we must unquestionably strengthen economic and monetary union.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE).** – (RO) The European Council meeting scheduled for this month also intends to discuss the topic of Member States' national objectives and their consistency with the EU 2020 objectives. The methods and directions which will be followed by states certainly play a crucial role in relation to the objectives, while the regions will have new challenges to deal with. This is why I believe that the cohesion policy must continue to receive the Council's support as a main instrument for promoting economic growth. I also put forward this idea as part of the report I initiated in the Committee on Regional Development.

I reassert my belief that the cohesion policy is the main pillar of future development, generating economic growth and employment. In specific terms, this would involve providing support tailored, through projects, to the specific nature of each region, in accordance with their development guidelines. Europe 2020 must be a Europe of efficient partnerships for generating economic growth and jobs.

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D).** – (LT) I welcome the European Commission's efforts to establish an instrument to stabilise Europe's financial situation, which would help both countries within and outside the euro area to overcome financial difficulties and also aims to reform the system of economic management. Practice has shown that monetary union alone does not ensure the economic stability of the Community. In order to achieve that, we must urgently combine the economic potential of all 27 EU Member States and better coordinate their policy in the area of the economy. Through coordination, we will also create a more effective supervision mechanism. We, as the European Union, are losing and clearly will continue to lose out to the competition by allowing various foreign rating agencies and international funds to evaluate us and take decisions on the financial state of our EU Member States.

The point has been made several times that Europe requires its own credit rating agency and this can begin to become a reality and I am pleased that JC Juncker, Head of the Eurogroup, is already talking about the need for such an agency. The European Union is also able to have its own fund through which we could establish a European market supervision system.

**Salvatore Iacolino (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the worsening of the budget situation of the majority of the Member States is plain for all to see, as is the rise in unemployment within the European Union.

Indicators are pointing to a level of alarm that could result in social alarm. In April 2010, statistics indicated that there were 46.5 million unemployed in the 24 most industrialised Western countries, that is, 3 300 000 more than in the same period last year. This situation is particularly tragic and we therefore need cohesion and unity.

The Commission's proposals appear to be heading in the right direction. We have to take a Union-wide approach. There needs to be a shared road map setting out a constructive, long-term vision. At the same time, we need to coordinate Member States' policies on budget laws in order to protect families, protect individuals and, in essence, protect the social cohesion of the individual Member States.

**Derek Vaughan (S&D).** – Madam President, creating jobs and growth is a noble aim. The question is how we achieve them. I fail to see how we can achieve them by cutting spending quickly and deeply. Unfortunately, it seems that many Member States, through political dogma, are intent on doing this.

In the UK, despite lower debt and growth forecasts, the government is relishing the prospect of cuts in public spending and public services. Instead, we should be planning for the future and planning for growth. The EU should do likewise.

We need to ensure we have strong policies and adequate funding for research and development, for education and training and, of course, for cohesion policy and structural funds, which is so important to many regions right across the EU. I would hope the Council recognises this and puts in place those policies and prepares for recovery and growth.

**Antonio Cancian (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I was only too happy to follow this debate this morning.

The crisis is pushing us towards decisions which, perhaps, seemed impossible in the past. I wanted, however, to put a question to Mr Barroso who spoke of growth, growth and more growth, and, of course, also to Mr López Garrido: regarding resources – leaving aside their programming and rationalisation, and the introduction of public-private partnerships as a financial method and means of support – do you plan to establish a European development fund, financed perhaps by a European bond market, to provide effective, concrete opportunities for growth? Or will we be staying within the normal, traditional budget, given that today, it is impossible for the States to provide a single euro more than what they are already spending on themselves?

**Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (ES) Madam President, I thank Mr Barroso for his recognition and encouragement of the Spanish Presidency of the Council. I thank him very much for his kind words. I really must say – and I am not just saying this to return his praise – that the way that the Commission has worked has been extraordinarily significant, efficient, and in very close cooperation with the Spanish Presidency. I would like to thank the Commission for this in the most formal place that I could do so: in the plenary sitting of the European Parliament.

I think that tomorrow the European Council will discuss the problem that is most important to Europe: this extremely deep crisis and how to get out of it. Above all, there is going to be a discussion that must focus on the public, who are the ones who are really suffering as a result of this crisis. It must focus on the unemployed, on families and on the people affected by this recession, by this decline in economic activity, by the difficult situation in the public treasuries and public accounts: by all the consequences of this crisis.

However, the EU's reaction to this situation has not been to shrink back or retreat, but to emphatically set out the objectives for the future. This is what is in the annex to the Council conclusions. The European Union wants to have an active population of 75% in the next decade and it wants investment of 3% of gross national product in research and development, thus influencing the competitiveness of our economy.

It wants the European Union to maintain its leadership in terms of the famous 20-20-20 targets for combating climate change; it wants no more than 10% of pupils to leave school early in the European Union; it wants more than 40% higher education in the European Union; it wants 20 million people to come out of poverty in the next few years.

I think that these are very important, very clear and very real objectives that are clearly aimed at the public. What the public want right now is to see that the EU institutions are united. What they want is for all of our European institutions to work on those objectives and the policies needed to achieve them. They want the institutions to do this in partnership and in synergy and therefore they want cooperation. This is surely the most notable aspect of the European Union: that its institutions function positively, not to cancel each other out but to increase and strengthen the actions of each institution.

I must say that the Commission has never had such a strong presence in terms of putting forward initiatives in response to the crisis. The importance of the Commission's role has been mentioned here repeatedly, and Parliament is very sensitive to that role as the Commission expresses the general European interest. However, there have never been so many initiatives from the Commission that are so well respected and so positively viewed by the Member States. Commissioner Rehn, who has played a leading role in some of those initiatives, is here with us today.

Mr Verhofstadt was talking about the External Action Service. We are about to reach an agreement on this between Parliament, the Commission, the High Representative and the Council. He was also talking about the financial supervision package. I would especially like to refer to two speeches, by Mr Bullmann and Mr García-Margallo y Marfil, which were positive and constructive, for which I thank them. I hope that in the week referred to by Mr García-Margallo y Marfil, there can be an agreement on the financial supervision package, which is absolutely essential. Both parties do, of course, need to get moving on this: both Parliament and the Council. We are naturally going in that direction, because both parties have already started to move. I believe that we can conclude this agreement. It is essential that we secure this agreement.



As I said, the Commission, and also Parliament, have never played such an important role. I must say that the motion for a resolution that is going to be voted on immediately after this debate, signed by various parliamentary groups and the vast majority of Members, has the Council's full support. We agree with this motion for a resolution. We are heading in the same direction as Parliament in terms of combating the crisis.

Parliament is also in agreement with the 2020 strategy, which is an essential and central element of the motion for a resolution. The core elements of the strategy are probably modernisation and competitiveness measures to be taken by the European Union as objectives for the EU and its Member States. It is a binding strategy, which makes it different from the previous one.

Some of you have also mentioned this aspect. It is going to be a binding strategy, and the Commission will play a leading role in requiring that the objectives in the 2020 strategy be binding. This is also part of what we call 'governance'.

I would like to mention the importance of the aspects of the 2020 strategy in terms of the technological modernisation of the European Union, in terms of the social impact of the measures being adopted in economic policy and in terms of the green economy. This is a new strategy for the future, and it is supported by the binding nature of its objectives. I think that this is a fundamental change, which features both in the conclusions for the Council meeting tomorrow and in the motion for a European Parliament resolution.

I do not think that the positions of the Commission, Parliament and also of the Member States have ever been so aligned, which is what the public wants. The EU Member States, represented in the European Council and in the Council, are, of course, a European institution: another of the EU's institutions along with Parliament and the Commission. Those Member States are currently clearly in favour of economic union and of taking a step from merely monetary union towards economic union and economic governance.

If we look at what has happened in recent months, for example, when help was given to a country like Greece, it was the Member States who took that step. I have said before in this House that perhaps it happened too slowly, but that step was taken and very significant aid was given to Greece. An EU financial stability mechanism was also adopted, which was also extremely important and was absolutely unimaginable a few weeks ago, and it was produced and established by the Member States of the Union.

If we look at the conclusions – for example, paragraph 15 of the draft conclusions that we will be examining in the General Affairs Council on Monday, and which will be discussed tomorrow – we can see that the European Council is making an outstanding commitment to the regulation of financial services. It says that the European Council calls on the Council and the European Parliament to rapidly adopt financial supervision measures. It also says that the European Council calls for legislative proposals to be drawn up, which will come from the European Commission, on 'alternative investment funds', which are hedge funds. It also asks for close examination of the Commission's proposal for the supervision of credit rating agencies and asks the Commission – showing constant confidence in the Commission – for proposals on what are known as 'derivatives markets'; in other words, what has been described as 'short selling' on the stock markets. These proposals go hand in hand with another proposal in this paragraph that talks about the need to establish a tax on financial institutions: not only banks but financial institutions. Once again, I will say that all this was absolutely unimaginable not long ago and it is in a proposal that is going to a European Council resolution tomorrow.

The same of course applies to the 2020 strategy, which will be part of the resolution tomorrow that I hope will launch this strategy on behalf of the European Council. It states that all the EU instruments, including the European funds, the Structural Funds and all the policies, must serve the strategy and the structural reforms that the European Council is going to ask for tomorrow, when it talks about the economic governance of the EU.

That used to be a bad word, a taboo: it used to be heresy to talk about the economic governance of the Union. Now, that is no longer the case. A text such as the European Council conclusions is talking about the economic governance of the Union. Very important steps are being taken by the Member States along with Parliament and the Commission.

The message coming from the European Council tomorrow should therefore be that economic policy in Europe is being led by the European Union, which has been the objective of the Spanish Presidency of the Council since its term began.

The European Union therefore wants coordination of economic policies. It is not led by the markets but by the European Union, and that is the proposal. That is the firm, loud and clear message that should come from the European Council tomorrow.

This is my last intervention from this seat for this past semester in office, and I would like to express my thanks to you, to this democratic House.

For me, it has been an honour to represent the Council here in this European Parliament; to discuss with you, to share ideas, to share thoughts, to share opinions and perspectives. I have learned much this last semester and one of those lessons which I have learned is that this House, this Parliament, represents the values of Europe: freedom, tolerance and solidarity. These values are our real shield, our real protection, our real weapon of mass construction. For me, it has been a real pleasure, an honour to be here during this last six months representing the Council and representing the values of Europe.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – Thank you Mr López Garrido. Indeed, it is we who would like to thank you very warmly.

**Olli Rehn**, *Member of the Commission.* – Madam President, let me thank you first of all for a very substantive and responsible debate and for your draft resolutions on Europe 2020 and economic governance. I also want to thank you for your support for the work the Commission has been doing, especially in the fields of financial market reform and the reinforcement of economic governance.

I would also like to thank Diego López Garrido and his team and the Spanish Presidency for their excellent cooperation and extraordinary performance during these very difficult times in Europe with the most severe financial crisis and economic recession for ages. It has been a great pleasure to work with you and I highly appreciate that. Of course, I want to wish the best of success for Spain today. I could wish some success for Switzerland as well but only once they have joined the European Union!

Tomorrow's European Council will take place in a rather dualistic economic situation. On the one hand, economic recovery is in progress and is increasingly gaining momentum, even though it is still gradual and fragile. On the other hand, the turmoil in the sovereign debt markets has cast a serious shadow over financial stability in Europe, which could, at worst, derail the still nascent recovery of the real economy.

The European Union has taken coordinated and determined action to prevent a financial meltdown, but we are certainly not yet out of troubled waters. We must stabilise and reform our economies to pursue sustainable growth and create the jobs Europe badly needs. That is what our citizens expect from their leaders. The European Council must show the way and take bold decisions to this effect tomorrow.

In that context, it is particularly essential to reinforce economic governance in Europe. We need to upgrade preventive budgetary surveillance to avoid future crises, we need to address macro-economic imbalances to go to the root of the problems and we need to construct a permanent mechanism for crisis management. All in all, it is high time to feel at ease with life in the EMU and to create a genuine economic union to accompany the monetary union that already exists.

The European Council made a very important decision when it asked President Herman Van Rompuy, in conjunction with the Commission, to set up the task force to suggest ways and means to enhance economic governance. Tomorrow, President Van Rompuy will give a progress report on the work of the task force and the first set of orientations. The Commission's communication of 12 May has provided a solid foundation for the work of the task force. There is broad support for our initiatives and we shall follow them up shortly with concrete reform proposals.

We must now seize the moment to complete the construction of the economic and monetary union. I count on your support in this regard. I count on your support for our proposals and for the Community method, which we have to maintain and further reinforce in this context. Let us keep up the momentum, get results and have the new system functional already by the beginning of next year.

Concerning the Toronto Summit, the overarching theme should be to strive for unity, redress the problems we are facing, reinforce confidence in the global economy and safeguard economic recovery. I took part in the preparatory meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors in Busan, Korea, two weeks ago, and I shall also accompany President Barroso to the Toronto Summit.

There will be three priority issues in Toronto. Quite briefly on this, the first is fiscal consolidation. There was an important change of tone in Busan in the meeting of the finance ministers and governors. They agreed that the advanced countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, need to accelerate fiscal consolidation. From the EU side, we made it clear that, given the debt levels around the industrial world – in the US and Japan they are higher than in Europe, for the moment – the fiscal problem is a global problem and not one limited to the EU only, and this problem needs to be addressed as such.

Europe's strategy of coordinated and differentiated fiscal exit was recognised, and indeed endorsed, by our G20 partners and the G20 Ministers therefore agreed on the need for differentiation very much in line with the European Union approach.

Secondly, the G20 must also aim at rebalancing global demand. This will put the world economy on a more sustainable and higher growth path as we come out of the crisis and for that, it is essential that we tackle global imbalances, especially between the US and China.

The third major issue is, of course, financial market reform. There has to be a real step forward at the Toronto Summit, given its importance for global stability and also for the credibility of the G20. Therefore, the G20 in Toronto should carry through the rules agreed on improving bank capital, taking action on non-cooperative jurisdictions, and reforming the derivatives markets.

In particular, we need a strong message from Toronto on bank levies and the G20 needs to show that it is coordinating and delivering on this. No consensus was reached in Busan, Korea, on the idea of such a levy on financial institutions to foster financial stability and strengthen the resolution framework but, on the other hand, there was agreement on developing a common set of principles on burden sharing.

It is indeed essential that the public sector should not bear the cost of the financial sector's failures, and the principles should also reflect the possible costs of resolution and incentivise appropriate behaviour.

The finance ministers also agreed that further progress on the financial repair of the banking and financial sector is critical for global recovery. These discussions will continue in Toronto, and I can say from the point of view of the European Commission that we are in favour of broad transparency over the bank stress tests, which are essential to restoring and reinforcing confidence in the European economy.

In conclusion, for both the European Council and the G20, it is now high time for delivery on a smart strategy over fiscal exit, growth enhancing, balancing and reforms, financial market reforms and reinforcing economic governance. It is essential that the European Council and the G20 now rise to the occasion and concretely deliver at this critical moment for the European economy as well as for the global economy.

**President.** – I have received eight motions for resolutions<sup>(1)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The joint debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Wednesday, 16 June 2010.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT)** Faced by the deepening economic and social crisis – a bitter reproach hanging over the EU and the economic and social policies that it has been pursuing – the Commission and the European Council are showing signs of unprecedented shamelessness. In fact, the declared objectives of 'recovering from the crisis', 'growth', 'social cohesion' and 'economic cohesion', which have been repeatedly stated and are unquestionably necessary, clearly contradict the imposition of the irrational criteria of the so-called Stability and Growth Pact, as well as what is termed 'expenditure-focused' fiscal consolidation, done at any cost and without taking the specific nature of individual Member States into consideration, especially those with weaker and more dependent economies.

We are well aware of the meaning and implications of this approach: greater pressure on the job market, on the labour force – in the sense of devaluing it and intensifying exploitation – and on the social protection, health and education systems. In short, it aims to dismantle the social functions of governments. The severity of these approaches, handing workers and ordinary people the bill for a crisis that was not of their making, contrasts with the indulgent attitude towards financial capital, since little more than vague, non-specific

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(1) See Minutes

intentions have been announced, and even then they are utterly inadequate and no one knows when they will be put into practice ...

**Louis Grech (S&D), in writing.** – Before the final adoption of the EU 2020 strategy, the European Council should strengthen the structure of the EU 2020 and define a clear set of political priorities, realistic targets and deadlines that ensure the achievement of a green, knowledge-based, and social market economy in Europe by 2020. The new strategy should be a reflection of the current economic situation, a reproduction of the lessons learned from the Lisbon Strategy, and seeking to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity for all European citizens. One of the main flagship initiatives of the EU 2020 strategy should be the Single European market, with the challenges of social justice, economic growth and a focus on benefits to citizens, consumer protection and SMEs. The Single market should be the main catalyst in the economic recovery and, at the same time, would have to be accepted by citizens as championing their interests, by consumers as protecting their rights and by SMEs as giving them the right incentives. We need a new holistic and common approach, one which fully integrates citizens' and consumers' concerns, by giving them the opportunity to maximise their potential and to make full use of the benefits of a sustainable European Union.

**Cristian Dan Preda (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) Although the debate focused on the EU 2020 strategy and economic governance, the European Council will also most likely discuss Iceland's application to join the EU. Bearing in mind the Commission's view on Iceland's EU accession (of 24 February 2010), as well as the report which I am drafting at the moment and which is being discussed in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, I am confident that in its meeting on 17 June, the European Council will recommend initiating accession negotiations with Iceland. I also hope that Iceland will round off the significant progress which it has already made and will adopt the *acquis communautaire*, making it a new member of the European family.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing.** – (PL) The European Council is again going to discuss the strategy for growth and jobs and the fight against the crisis – the EU 2020 strategy. These matters need to be discussed together, because they are related to each other in the short, medium and long term. It is a good idea to point out some of the causes of the difficult situation which has arisen, and present proposals for corrective measures. We did not adhere to the Stability and Growth Pact. The question arises as to where the institutions were – where were the people who were responsible for supervision and monitoring? The European Union does not have a truly common market – the countries of the monetary union are highly diversified, they do not have a uniform financial policy, and economic union is in its infancy. The EU has to be more resolute in regulating the market, including the banking and financial markets. The help which was given to financial institutions and banks must be directed to and used for development purposes. The EU budget should be based on many and varied sources, including a financial transaction tax. The EU's competitiveness in relation to third countries should be based on the standards which are in force in Europe. A European Union mechanism for economic governance in relation to the 27 Member States should be developed and put into effect by the Commission, in accordance with principles established by the Council and Parliament. The activity of the Union should be extended by measures to ensure adequate consistency and complementarity between national budgets and the EU budget. In relation to the countries of the euro area, the ECB must strengthen common monetary policy. In addition, it is necessary to work with national governments on certain common measures in the area of fiscal policy.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), in writing.** – (RO) The EU is faced with the effects of the economic and financial crisis, along with the social impact of the rise in unemployment, climate change and demographic challenges. The demographic challenges and impact of the economic and financial crisis are jeopardising the sustainability of pension systems, thereby increasing the risk of poverty, especially for the elderly and young people. The EU 2020 strategy should have reflected the EU's political vision up to 2020 for generating sustainable economic development, jobs and a decent living for Europe's citizens. This strategy will form the basis both for the mid-term review of the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework and for the future 2014-2020 financial perspective. The EU needs to invest in the sustainable development of the intermodal trans-European transport system, in the European energy infrastructure, in energy efficiency and agriculture. The EU 2020 strategy should be based on the outcome of public consultations and debates on the future cohesion policy, the future common agricultural policy, the future common policy for transport and energy, the future industrial policy and on the future research and innovation policy. I call on the European Council to initiate consultations with the European Parliament, national parliaments, local authorities, social partners and NGOs prior to adopting the EU 2020 strategy. This is the only way to ensure that this EU 2020 strategy becomes more than just a piece of paper.

**Iuliu Winkler (PPE), in writing.** – The EU today is facing a crucial challenge: it has to make the choice between the approach based on the national interest, strongly promoted by some of the Member States, and the

common aspiration that the EU should remain a major global player. The upcoming G20 summit should trigger a moment of reflection: if we want a stronger post-crisis EU, we must be aware of the fact that even the biggest European states will soon stand small in front of the BRICs or the US in the global challenge,

The answer should be based on the common European approach and more economic coordination, rather than on the intergovernmental approach which has a strong tendency towards national interests and favours exceptions. We will not be able to have a stronger EU if new dividing lines are drawn among the Member States and the new economic governance focuses only on the eurozone, removing the fundamental principle of European solidarity.

I think that planning a successful European core while excluding those who are not in the euro club is quite immoral. The eurozone cannot be successful without the success of the whole EU. Any other approach is shaking the very foundations of the European architecture.

## 5. Conclusions of the EU/Russia Summit (31 May - 1 June) (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the conclusions of the EU/Russia Summit (31 May - 1 June).

**Catherine Ashton,** *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Madam President, I am delighted that we have a chance today to talk about the outcome of the last EU-Russia Summit in Rostov-on-Don. It was a good summit, it was pragmatic and constructive in character and it confirmed Russia's desire for a stronger relationship with the European Union.

At the summit, we launched the Partnership for Modernisation. As honourable Members know, a constant theme in President Medvedev's time in office has been his recognition that Russia must modernise. The EU – as Russia's most important trade partner and biggest investor – is a natural partner in this. Our approach is clear: to be successful, any drive to modernise must take a broad approach. It must encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, but also strengthen democratic values and the rule of law. This is why the effective functioning of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and dialogue with civil society are priority areas for the Partnership for Modernisation.

As the EU has in the past, we raised concerns about the day-to-day situation for human rights defenders and journalists. The demonstrations on 31 May in Moscow were an example of the difficulties that continue regarding the constitutional right to freedom of assembly. Growing instability in the North Caucasus is another area of concern.

But there have been positive developments too, and it is important we acknowledge them: the extension of the moratorium on the death penalty and the ratification of Protocol 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Work on the rule of law and fighting corruption will also contribute to a more business friendly environment. Investment flows to Russia have fallen off, and Russia understands it must do more to attract investors.

Joining the World Trade Organisation fits with this broader strategy of strengthening rules-based processes. The EU backs Russia's early accession and we hope that the work to do so can be completed soon.

Political commitments to open trade must be translated into reality. The implementation of the Russia-Kazakhstan-Belarus Customs Union has raised some concerns. We have no issue with customs unions in general – the EU is a customs union – but we are concerned when these hinder trade rather than promote it, as appears to be the case with the proposed customs union.

On energy, our discussions focused on physical infrastructure, on the legal basis for our energy relations, and on energy efficiency. The Partnership for Modernisation will have a big part to play here. We need to see solid energy provisions in our new agreement, reflecting the principles of the Energy Charter Treaty. We also underlined that we see the Energy Charter as the most natural forum to discuss proposals for a multilateral energy security framework.

Energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gases are key in the fight against climate change. We encouraged Russia to be more ambitious on targets (currently 15%-20% compared to 1990 levels), and we will continue our efforts in the run-up to Cancún.

On visas, Russia is keen to proceed quickly, but it understands the internal context on this sensitive issue in the European Union. The EU underlined the need to move step-by-step, in a results-oriented approach. We have tabled a concrete proposal to this end and will also look again at our Visa Facilitation Agreement. We hope that bilateral agreements on local border traffic can be concluded with both Poland and Lithuania which would help Russians living in Kaliningrad.

We also discussed crisis management cooperation, with both sides underlining the good experiences of EUFOR Chad and EU Navfor Atalanta. We agreed to see if we could develop this cooperation further. Russia handed over concrete proposals, which we will examine. Obviously, the EU decision-making autonomy must remain intact.

The summit was also an opportunity to discuss a number of international issues: the Middle East peace process, the Iranian nuclear programme, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Kosovo, the Eastern Neighbourhood, as well as broader European security. I was pleased with the joint statement that Foreign Minister Lavrov and I made on the loss of life during the Israeli military operation against the flotilla sailing to Gaza.

However, and as expected, our views diverged on Georgia, Kosovo and Moldova, where we heard well-known Russian positions.

**Elmar Brok**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you very much for your statement, Baroness Ashton, and also for the way in which the summit was organised. It has become clear, and this was said at the summit, that people are concerned about many of the developments in Russia relating to the rule of law and about certain court cases and demonstrations. One of many other causes for concern is the fact that, in relation to Georgia, for example, the rule of international law has still not been established. However, on the other side, it is important to recognise the progress that has been made and the Partnership for Modernisation will definitely make an important contribution in this respect.

It is essential that we are aware of the extent of Russia's strategic importance for us. We have significant common interests in the area of the economy and of energy. It seems to me to be of great importance that it was possible to reach a common position in the 5+1 talks in relation to Iran and the United Nations resolution, as well as on other issues. I also believe that it is crucial for the work of the Middle East Quartet to be intensified if we want to make progress.

However, it is also a question of Russia's credibility when it comes to whether we can move forwards with the negotiations for a new partnership and cooperation agreement and how the policy on the four common areas and the question of human rights can be included. As you have said, the fundamental issues which have so far been covered by the Energy Charter, and which are not being applied, are important to many of us. Russia must be prepared to make agreements of this kind legally binding, in the same way as it must be ready to take the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations and the steps towards membership of the WTO seriously, if it wants to play a full role in the international arena. The customs union with Kazakhstan and Belarus is not a good example in this respect. However, I believe that these international links are important, in particular, with regard to the credibility of the G20 commitment.

I think it is right for us to press ahead with the visa question. We should make it clear, however, that this must be consistent with changes in the visa processes for our eastern neighbours, who must not suffer as a result. It must not be the case that it is easier to travel to Europe from Ukraine with a Russian passport than with a Ukrainian passport. I hope that you will focus on the timing in this respect.

**Adrian Severin**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – Madam President, EU-Russian relations have a strong strategic attribute, being characterised not only by our economic interest, but also by the objective of close cooperation in various international areas. Geographically, Russia is, and will remain, the European Union's closest neighbour, and will continue to play a protagonist role in both the Euro-Asian and the Euro-Atlantic space.

One could also speak about EU-Russian complementarities between needs and resources, as well as the coincidence or convergence of certain objectives of global relevance.

One has to understand that an unstable, vulnerable Russia affected by internal strife constitutes a challenge to the European Union, while the opposite stands for stability. I hope also that Russia will understand that a stable neighbourhood is better for its security and not the other way round.

The framework for EU-Russian strategic relations should envisage action on several levels. Partnership for modernisation is really important; this would contribute to the creation of trust, interdependence and

convergence with Russia across broad areas of common interest. However, a partnership for WTO accession should also be considered, through which Russia could benefit from the European Union facilitation gateway for its WTO integration.

An energy community is important. This should also include a trilateral cooperation instrument with the transition countries. Perhaps, together with the United States, we also have to talk in a trilateral format about updating European and global security arrangements in such a way as to establish a kind of global mechanism of equilibrium through empowerment and subsidiarity, within which we have to approach human rights in their right perspective. We have to avoid using the dialogue about human rights as a geopolitical tool, but put them at the foundation of real political cooperation and real institutional interoperation.

**Kristiina Ojuland**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ET) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, the EU-Russia summit that took place in Rostov-on-Don raised hopes of a breakthrough in mutual relations, especially as regards economic cooperation and also, more widely, international cooperation with Russia. With respect to this, however, when developing relations, we think it is important that we do not fail to emphasise the principles of democracy, human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law.

The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe supports the modernisation programme, whose aim is the diversification of Russia's economic environment and the development of trading relations with the European Union. This objective is achievable provided that Russia does everything it can to sort out its economic and legal environment. For us, the customs union formed between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus is a sign that Russia does not currently wish to join the WTO, which, in turn, is frightening away potential investors. As regards external investment in Russia, we would like to see legal certainty, whether we are talking about the energy sector or some other area.

We would like to see a greater willingness on the part of Russia to improve cooperation on cross-border goods freighting, but we also think that it is reasonable to simplify the visa regime between the European Union and Russia. In order to achieve this, however, Russia must take concrete and practical steps. With regard to energy security, the ALDE Group considers it very important to continue negotiations with Russia and to reach an agreement which is based on the principles of the energy charter and which guarantees security of supply for consumers.

We welcome the ratification of Protocol 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the retention of the moratorium on the death penalty in Russia, but we would point out that the obligations relating to Georgia have not yet been met. We also want to see fair cooperation from Russia in resolving the conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus.

Finally, I would like to come back once more to basic values. The ALDE Group would like to develop a long-term partnership with Russia in all areas, but we cannot allow our partner to deviate from and thereby violate the principles of the rule of law and democracy. No economic benefit can be more important than the values represented by the European Union. One characteristic example of how the Russian Federation has deviated from the principles of the rule of law is the second trial of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, to which attention was also drawn in Amendment number 5, introduced by the ALDE Group, which we ask our fellow Members to support. Thank you.

**Werner Schulz**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, we have a poor resolution on an inconclusive summit between the EU and Russia on the table in front of us. In the light of President Medvedev's efforts to modernise Russia, we must keep explaining to him that modernisation is not just a technical issue.

Although we fully understand that Russia wants to develop nanotechnology and establish a Silicon Valley, modernisation also requires an active and vibrant civil society in which creativity can be unleashed. We should be offering Russia a complete modernisation partnership of this kind and this is why it is important to overcome the deficits and address the problems. We are grateful to the President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy, for doing this in Rostov and to Baroness Ashton for her efforts at the recent summit.

However, this should also be reflected in our resolution. This is why we have tabled four amendments and I would like to ask you to support them. They concern putting a stop to political persecution, improving the penal system, investigating the death of Sergei Magnitsky, obtaining the release of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, bringing the conflict in the North Caucasus to an end and introducing freedom of assembly, as guaranteed in the Russian constitution. External freedom – in other words, visa liberalisation

– should go hand in hand with internal freedom. We are convinced that freedom in Russia should be indivisible.

**Charles Tannock**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, given Russia's physical proximity to the EU and its trillion-dollar economy and huge natural resources, particularly gas, the EU's strategic relationship with Russia is of vital importance. My group acknowledges that Russia has a key role to play internationally as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In particular, Russia has an important part to play with regard to the situation in North Korea and, via the Quartet, in the Middle East process, and also in persuading Iran to desist from its nuclear weapons programme and in persuading Turkey to open its borders with Armenia.

In Ukraine, a country dear to my heart, the election of President Yanukovich has substantially improved the previously strained relations between Moscow and Kiev, but the controversial decision to extend Russia's leases on its naval bases in the Crimea should not be taken as a sign that Ukraine has rejected the European Union and returned fully into the arms of Mother Russia. In particular, we should repudiate the statement by Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, that Ukraine eventually joining the European Union is not in Russia's vital national interest. President Yanukovich only won a narrow victory, and at least half of all Ukrainians support closer ties for their country with the European Union; we cannot simply walk away from our responsibility to respond positively to their aspirations.

*(The sitting was suspended)*

## 6. Welcome

**President**. – Ladies and gentlemen, I have the pleasure of informing you that, within the framework of interparliamentary meetings, a delegation from the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China is on a working visit to the European Parliament for a few days on the occasion of the 29th EP-China interparliamentary meeting. I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the members of this delegation.

Mr Peixin, Vice-Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and Mr Rivellini, an MEP, are the co-presidents of this 29th meeting of our respective parliaments.

The European Parliament is pleased to have this dialogue, which has been regular and ongoing for some time now. This new meeting will strengthen relations between our parliaments and allow a wide range of issues of common interest to the EU and to the People's Republic of China to be discussed.

I would like to express my wish to the members of both delegations that the meetings they have already held, as well as those which will take place today, will make an active contribution towards bringing our two institutions closer together.

## 7. Conclusions of the EU/Russia Summit (31 May - 1 June) (continuation of debate)

**President**. – We shall resume the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the conclusions of the EU/Russia Summit (31 May - 1 June).

**Helmut Scholz**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – *(DE)* Madam President, Baroness Ashton, in the European Parliament, we frequently discuss the relationship between the European Union and the Russian Federation. I have signed Parliament's joint motion for a resolution on behalf of my group, despite the limited nature of the statements relating to the results of the recent EU/Russia Summit.

However, I would like to make the following additional point. This was the first summit after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and, for this reason, the Russians hoped that the European Union would take a more determined approach. For Russia, the EU is a natural strategic partner with which it has links as a result of our shared values. I would like to remind everyone at this point that in February 2010, the Russian Federation was the last of the 47 members of the Council of Europe to ratify the European Convention on Human Rights. This was a clear indication that Russia shares the common values of the Council of Europe. Russia was hoping, in particular, to make progress on the issue of lifting visa requirements. The negotiations have been ongoing for seven years and have still not produced any concrete results.



I very much share the view that the proposed Partnership for Modernisation is a step in the direction of a strategic partnership agreement. However, in my opinion, it does not go far enough, because, according to the Centre for European Reform, European technologies are not supposed to be transferred to projects in which the Russian state is taking part, for example. The European Union is being too short-sighted in this respect and missing out on many opportunities for cooperation, particularly in the case of small and medium-sized businesses, and therefore also on opportunities for building trust.

Why are these meetings, which have been going on for years, so lacking in substance? In my view, we should bear in mind that the most important challenge faced by both sides continues to be overcoming the lack of mutual trust. There is too much rhetoric and very often a lack of serious projects which could make a genuine contribution to building trust in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life.

Energy and the environment are key aspects of a constructive relationship between the EU and Russia which aims to solve existing problems. We talk all too often about energy policy being a strategic tool for cooperation and a positive example of the development of trust, but there are frequently misunderstandings and omissions in the area of energy in particular. We must take decisive measures to resolve this.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Russia will be an extremely important strategic partner for the European Union, and it is therefore vital to reach a broad partnership and cooperation agreement.

This agreement is a priority for our foreign policy because it would create the appropriate forum for comprehensive collaboration with Moscow. I am thinking of bilateral trade, liberalisation of visas, control of illegal immigration, the fight against terrorism, organised crime and climate change, through to particularly urgent issues such as Iran's nuclear programme, pacification of the Caucasus and the Middle East peace process.

With regard to energy, the European Union should cast off certain prejudices and assume a more pragmatic and consistent approach. If we want to resolve the issue of security of energy supply, we should acknowledge the added value of the South Stream project which guarantees a secure route and abundant energy, necessary for economic recovery over the coming years.

In relations with an important partner such as Russia, Europe should operate on two distinct levels: on the one hand, discussing ideal and ideological values, and, on the other, taking the practical approach required for relations between states.

**Jean-Marie Le Pen (NI).** – (FR) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, I am pleased at the new dynamic that has been created by the launch of the partnership for modernisation, and I am pleased at its pragmatism. This new partnership, if nothing else, would at least have the benefit of emphasising the extent to which Russia is an inevitable geopolitical partner of the European Union. I am also pleased at the positive comments on cooperation with Russia concerning the management of the crisis.

However, I have some comments to make. While the demands of the Union are always highlighted, the interests or positions of its partner seem to be systematically underestimated or dismissed, whether in the field of energy or in the way in which it analyses the Eastern Partnership and the Atlanticist aspirations of its closest neighbours.

I would also comment that the firmness that most Member States show in their views, and the virulence with which human rights violations are condemned, seem to be reserved for Russia alone. The comments are more civilised, and the diplomacy more muted, when it comes to China, for example, and its systematic violations of the rule of law, if only in the context of the Laogai, of that vast factory, from the point of view of European minimum social requirements, while our French or European workers are unemployed.

Allow me to remind you of the adage *ad augusta per angusta* – through trial to triumph – because this is how I view Russia's efforts today, free from the Marxist criminal poison which, over so many decades, bled and imprisoned that country. The current Russian Federation has managed to make an entire nation walk tall again despite the considerable difficulties and challenges to which it still needs to respond.

Therefore, I would ask for a little modesty from ultra-Europeans, especially when the European superstate is not achieving any of its objectives, despite more and more costly methods and the progressive domination of the Member States of Western Europe and of Central and Eastern Europe.

I have to remind you also that this Parliament had more indulgence for the communist Soviet Union than for Russia. Furthermore, it is often the same people who previously agitated for the unilateral disarmament of the West and for Mr Gorbachev's participation in the Community who today feel the most righteous indignation and the greatest prudishness towards the partnership between the European Union and Russia.

On this subject, I must inform you, if you do not know already, of new historical facts which will be appearing as a result of the ongoing translation of the secret Soviet archives which the courageous Pavel Stroilov has been able to obtain. These archives have already given and will, in the future, give some unpleasant surprises to those who propagate the only permitted opinion on the reality of the end of the Cold War: who Mr Gorbachev really was, and the abuses by the ultra-European powers of today who, at that time, enthusiastically wanted to make certain Soviet projects possible.

At the risk of repeating myself, Russia is an essential strategic partner for the European states, and we must strengthen relations for the benefit of all parties. This country is closer to us in terms of culture, civilisation, history, geography, mutual interests and shared risks than certain states that you are about to allow to join the European Union.

**Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE).** – (NL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Mrs Ashton, I should like to start by thanking the fellow Members who have cooperated with me to bring about a good, clear resolution. Our resolution contains many strong criticisms of the summit in Rostov-on-Don. Like some commentators, we attribute the paltry result to Russia's preference for dealing bilaterally with Member States as opposed to the European Union; the reason being that they believe we still do not speak with one voice. What was your perception of the cooperation at this summit? In your view, did you really manage to come up with a European voice there?

I now have four specific questions. Was the partnership agreement even discussed at the summit? I believe it is of the utmost importance that we conclude a wide-ranging, legally binding agreement that goes beyond mere economic cooperation or new agreements on energy. Yet democracy and human rights must also form an integral part of the partnership agreement. Is this new partnership agreement even a priority for you, or for Russia?

When it comes to the Partnership for Modernisation, I feel excluded as an MEP. There is nothing wrong with concluding cooperation agreements, but the new modernisation agenda is a shining example of vagueness. That was not the only initiative I should have liked to discuss with you beforehand, as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Energy Charter and the fight against corruption strike me as far more important when it comes to the modernisation of the Russian economy.

Then there are the four common spaces: is the new modernisation agenda not the same as our previous agreement about the four common spaces?

In this resolution, we must focus heavily on human rights policy no matter what, and you have both done so. A number of amendments have also been tabled; in my opinion, it would be better to address them in the report on Russia.

**Hannes Swoboda (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, I would like to thank you for your clear and open report which demonstrated how important it is to enter into a partnership with Russia. I would like to see a strategic partnership developing. However, I must also say that Russia is a partner which unfortunately does not always comply with all the treaties and agreements, for example, with regard to Georgia. As one of the people who was highly critical of Georgia's activities during the last war, I regret that Russia is not keeping to the agreements with Georgia, because this weakens Russia's position and its opportunities to play a peacemaking role in this region.

Russia would normally also be involved in helping to resolve the very critical situation in Kyrgyzstan. Thank goodness it has made it clear that it only wants to become involved as part of the United Nations. This is an area where we must make our views clear to Russia. We want Russia to be our strategic partner, but it must follow the joint rules that have been drawn up in the United Nations and the agreements that have been made with the European Union.

I am very pleased about the positive developments in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. However, this does not and must not prevent the European Union from constantly improving its relationship with Ukraine. These two things are not mutually exclusive.

**Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE).** – (DE) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, my group agrees with what Mr Swoboda has just said. We would like to have a strategic partnership with Russia. However, we are also of the opinion that we do not have a partnership of this kind, simply because it is not yet possible to develop one on the basis of the values which we currently do not share with Russia. Nevertheless, I believe that there are some signs of hope. I think these signs represent a major opportunity during your term of office, Baroness Ashton, which was perhaps not available to your predecessor.

What I see in Russia is a 'western policy' which is more constructive than past policies. The settlement of the border dispute with Norway in the Arctic, which concerns major deposits of raw materials, represents a remarkable step forward. The agreement with Ukraine about the base in Sevastopol and the supplies of gas is another surprising step which will hopefully also bring some stability to gas supplies to the European Union. Yet another highly significant move is the reconciliation with Poland over the tragedy at Smolensk. All of these things are genuinely remarkable. I must also not forget to mention something which was genuinely unexpected. Russian state television has shown the film 'Katyn' by Andrzej Wajda on two occasions during prime time. This is an indication of a new attitude in Russia which gives me hope for the future.

It is also due to this 'western policy' that Russia has come to recognise that its real problems lie in the south and the east. Kyrgyzstan and Iran have both been mentioned in this respect. Perhaps Russia's voting habits in the UN Security Council with regard to the sanctions against Iran are part of this 'western policy'. The agreement on a new START treaty is definitely a result of it. It is true that there is hope. We can hope for an improvement in relations and for continuing progress towards a strategic partnership.

**Heidi Hautala (Verts/ALE).** – (FI) Madam President, I would sincerely like to thank the High Representative who travelled to Rostov-on-Don and the whole of the EU's Working Group on Human Rights. I am very pleased that you raised these issues, because, as you said, there are positive signs but also causes for concern. In my view, the European Parliament should clearly state these problems in its resolution tomorrow, as you said. There has been excellent cooperation between Parliament, the Commission and the Council, and that is how we must also continue when it comes to issues of human rights.

In this connection, I would also like to thank Commissioner Malmström for raising the matter of a very important human rights case in her discussions with her colleagues in Russia. She mentioned the case of the lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, which is a shocking example of how someone standing up for human rights can end up losing his life.

Nor must we close our eyes to the fact that when the EU-Russia Summit was in Rostov-on-Don, NGOs were prevented from assembling and demonstrating. They were only upholding Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which should guarantee freedom of assembly.

**Jacek Olgierd Kurski (ECR).** – (PL) Moscow has realised that without modernisation and wide-ranging access to Western technology, it has no chance of approaching the European average in terms of development. The European Union should take advantage of this. However, this is not happening, as is testified by the rather poor result of the EU-Russia Summit in Rostov-on-Don. It will always be like this, until the Union risks taking a hard line in negotiations with Russia on values and principles. Therefore, we need to say clearly that the new agreement on partnership and cooperation between Russia and the Union needs to include a binding section on human rights, and to say clearly that there can be no modernisation of Russia without its democratisation.

Therefore, in its resolution, Parliament should express regret at the lack of reaction of the European Union's representatives who took part in the summit with regard to the brutal action of the police in Moscow and Saint Petersburg on 31 May. It is not enough to applaud the Russian human rights organisation Memorial in this Parliament and award them the Sakharov Prize. There are some values which should also be defended by taking action.

(Applause)

**Bastiaan Belder (EFD).** – (NL) Madam President, ever since the time of Tsar Peter the Great, Russia and Europe have interpreted and applied the concept of modernisation differently: a material approach versus a more comprehensive interpretation involving both material and immaterial aspects.

This became clear once more following the most recent EU-Russia Summit, held in Rostov-on-Don at the start of this month. After signing a Partnership for Modernisation, President Medvedev stated that he understood this mainly in a technocratic sense. This leaves the European institutions with the important

task of continuing to call the Russian leadership to account regarding the essential immaterial aspect of real social modernisation: preserving basic fundamental rights in a free civil society.

Presidential Human Rights Commissioner Vladimir Lukin has expressed the worrying criticism that the new mandates of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) point in the other direction, i.e. the wrong one. Rightly, he issues a warning about the boomerang effect on the country's own State institutions. His position deserves considerable support, as the model of Prime Minister Putin must not be imitated in the region or by Ukraine.

**Krzysztof Lisek (PPE).** – (PL) It is very good that we are talking with Russia. We need to conduct a dialogue with Russia, and all sensible people will support this. The European Parliament, too, will support dialogue with Russia.

Russia is changing, at least this is what we hope. We hope – as President Medvedev has said – that in Russia there will be a dictatorship of the law, and that businesspeople from the European Union who invest in Russia or trade with Russia will be able to count on a legal situation there which will help and not hinder them. Unfortunately, hitherto, there have been many examples of problems of a legal nature in Russia. In discussions with Russia, we must remember this and talk about it.

We are glad, of course, that Russia is working with the Member States of the European Union, the international community, NATO, the United States and the UN on combating terrorism and for world security, but it obviously worries us that not everything has been dealt with – not everything in Russia's relations with her neighbours. It troubles us that there are still politicians in Russia who think about rebuilding the Russian Empire. In particular, the case of Georgia requires our intervention and constant reminders.

**Knut Fleckenstein (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, the EU-Russia Summit has produced reasonable results, in particular, as far as specifying the details of the Partnership for Modernisation is concerned. I very much welcome the fact that dialogue between the civil societies has been seen as a priority in this partnership.

As the chair of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Russia, I led a working group meeting in Perm a few days ago specifically on the subject of developing the civil society. We have once again seen how much progress has been made in Russia in recent years, but also how much still remains to be done and how much we can contribute to the discussions on the basis of our experiences, both good and otherwise.

Exchange and movement are key concepts for me. There can be no Partnership for Modernisation without the movement of people. For this reason, I am rather disappointed that the EU has not really made much progress in the area of travel without visas. We must now set specific objectives which the EU and Russia can work together to achieve. This is not about meeting schedules and certainly not about following certain sequences of events. It is all about ensuring that we take a predictable approach to these issues, that the criteria are clearly defined and that everyone, including Russia, can be sure that when these conditions are fulfilled and when the specific problems are solved, visa liberalisation will be possible.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR).** – (PL) Madam President, the Union's relations with Russia have to be a two-way street. It is obvious that we are giving Russia essential know-how for technological development, while they have to guarantee us an improvement in the climate for EU business to invest there, as well as legal stability. I greatly regret that during the summit we are discussing, it was a one-way street. It was we who gave to them, but they did not do much for us. In this joint resolution, and let us say this frankly, reference to specific cases of human rights violations is missing. It would be better to mention names and specific cases, and there have been many of them. Finally – if Mrs Merkel and Mr Medvedev are coming to an understanding on establishing an EU-Russia Political and Security Committee, this should be said specifically – is the Union really going to speak there with one voice or is it going to be the voice of particular Member States?

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE).** – (ES) Madam President, the importance of relations with Russia for the European Union is obvious: it is a powerful neighbour, a strategic economic and energy partner, and a permanent member of the Security Council.

Russia now seems to be more peaceful and settled, thanks to the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the United States, overcoming its disagreement with the anti-missile shield and the agreements that it has reached with the new Ukrainian Government. Furthermore, the tension caused two years ago by its intervention in Georgia has decreased. In this new context, we all welcome Russia's support of the recent Security Council Resolution 1929 on Iran. This is therefore a good time to improve relations with Russia.

Consequently, Baroness Ashton, I regret the fact that there has not been any progress in the negotiation of the new partnership agreement with Russia that first requires Russia to join the World Trade Organisation, something that has also still not been clarified.

Ladies and gentlemen, there needs to be an ambitious agreement that includes and regulates energy, investment and trade issues. Clear, legally binding rules are what is needed.

Also, I do, of course, agree with the European Union supporting and helping Russia in its desire to modernise, but the Partnership for Modernisation, which was the framework for the relationship established at the recent summit, should not be an alternative to the aforementioned agreement.

I certainly welcome the fact that the Presidency is including the effective functioning of the judicial system and stepping up the fight against corruption in that partnership.

I will conclude now: what I also want is a single, efficient and coherent EU policy, and I hope that the new instruments of the Treaty of Lisbon – you yourself, High Representative, and the permanent President of the European Council – will help us to achieve this aim of a single, coherent policy.

**Kristian Vigenin (S&D).** – (BG) I appreciate your efforts to call the Chamber to order, but it is not going to work. It is clear that the volume of noise is only going to rise. Madam Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative, I wish to thank you for appearing at this meeting before our Parliament. We followed the results with particular interest. According to our assessment, the summit was conducted in a constructive manner, with less tension, more realism and more mutual respect from both sides. I think that this new atmosphere will inevitably start to bear fruit in our relations.

The fact remains that even though we still have a discrepancy in our values, there is an ever-increasing number of common objectives shared by the European Union and Russia, which means that, in this respect, we have a broad field of cooperation. I cannot but agree with my fellow Members who say that the resolution which we are tabling and will adopt is weak. On the other hand, it is a balanced resolution, something which we have not had for a long time, and it reflects the outcome of this meeting.

Lastly, I believe that this in-depth dialogue with Russia is of great importance to the Eastern Partnership because it will offer us the opportunity to resolve together some of the long-standing problems in the countries participating in this partnership.

**Inese Vaidere (PPE).** – (LV) Ladies and gentlemen, undeniably, we must continue and develop our cooperation with Russia, but the new European Union partnership agreement must be much more precise and legally binding. Cooperation in the area of modernisation must be bilateral and proportional. As the coordinator of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, I should like to emphasise that in almost all of the 115 cases brought against the Russian Federation before the European Court of Human Rights, Russia has been found guilty. Regardless of the fact that the guilty parties have occasionally been identified by name, they have not been brought to justice, and no compensation has been paid to the innocent. Quite the contrary. This year, for example, a USSR army officer, V. Kononov, who, in 1944, pitilessly murdered and burnt alive peaceful Latvian villagers, including a pregnant woman, and who was found guilty of war crimes by the European Court of Human Rights, was awarded a decoration by Russia. What is more, prominent Russian politicians even issued threats against the European Court of Human Rights in this connection. This illustrates the differing conception of human rights between us and Russia, and these questions must definitely be resolved in the new agreement. Thank you.

**Ioan Mircea Paşcu (S&D).** – Madam President, to my mind, in terms of results and consequences, the German-Russian Summit of 5 June 2010 could prove to be more substantive than the Rostov-on-Don EU-Russia Summit. Certainly, security matters, Transnistria included, should be discussed between the EU High Representative and the Russian Foreign Minister in a more coherent and permanent framework, provided that the two parties mean the same thing when they speak, one about the dispute resolution mechanism, and the other about the EU-Russia Security Forum for exchanging views on current international affairs and security matters.

But even as I admit and respect, being a professor of international politics myself, that grand strategies are reserved for the big powers, I cannot forget that the details, wherein resides the devil, have usually been left to the lesser powers to deal with.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Madam President, many things were not achieved at the EU-Russia Summit. The Partnership for Modernisation which was agreed upon exists only on paper and it is unclear whether it

is based on a partnership agreement or a cooperation agreement. Not to mention the fact that no timeframes and no specific projects were identified. However, as we all know, it is essential for us to deepen our relationship with Russia, because Russia is Europe's most important partner, in particular, with regard to energy policy.

I believe it would be counterproductive, however, to link visa liberalisation with Russia to visa liberalisation with the countries covered by the EU's Eastern Partnership. Momentous decisions of this kind cannot be made *en bloc* for several states at a time. This is where we went wrong in the 2004 expansion. It is important to ensure that all the conditions are met by every individual state.

Given that the Gaza conflict, Kosovo and the reduction in the number of crisis areas were discussed during the summit, the question arises as to why the politically unstable situation in Kyrgyzstan was not also covered. If state structures collapse in Kyrgyzstan, there is a risk that it will pull down the neighbouring regions along with it. This would bring problems in many areas, including the Nabucco project.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Vice-President of the Council/High Representative*. – Madam President, I hope that those who want to listen to the conclusion of this debate are able to do so.

I am going to just concentrate on the few key points that I think a number of honourable Members have raised and, to begin with, the relationship between the partnership for modernisation and the political cooperation agreement. I would stress that they are not mutually exclusive. I want to see significant progress on the cooperation agreement. We have some issues, particularly concerning the sections on trade and economic matters, but there is no doubt in my mind that we do need to complete this agreement, alongside the launching – and it was only the beginning – of the Partnership for Modernisation approach.

I accept that there are some really serious challenges within that, as I think Mr Severin said but, as Mr Lambsdorff also said, it is a real opportunity for us to try and build on this. Mr Kurski, it does include issues of human rights. It is certainly not just about the technical advantages that Russia would like to see. It is much broader in terms of judicial reform. If I can refer honourable Members to the statement from the summit, I think you will find the breadth of what we are discussing is well captured within that. Mr Belder, you may also find this of value when you look at that.

In terms of the ability to speak with one voice – as Mrs Oomen-Ruijten particularly mentioned – we are in a position where we are beginning to see the EU operating much more coherently and consistently in a range of areas. I think Russia enjoys and prefers to be able to speak with all 27. That will never deflect from the strong bilateral relationships that Russia has – nor should it – but there are many issues, not least trade and economic issues, when the EU as 27 is much more capable of having the influence that we would wish to see in Russia than individual Member States would be.

Mr Tannock, Mr Le Pen and Mr Swoboda referred to two things. Firstly, regarding the links on crisis management, I have been talking to Sergei Lavrov about how we collaborate more effectively on issues around the world. Mr Mülzer, Kyrgyzstan had not been an issue of the significance it has become in the last 48 hours; but certainly, we do keep in touch with Russia on those issues and are now in touch with a range of partners. I have spent most of this weekend on the phone, in contact with Kazakhstan and with others, to try to take that forward.

Secondly, a number of Members, particularly Mr Swoboda and Mr Tannock, talked about Ukraine. Yesterday, I met the Ukrainian Prime Minister specifically to discuss ways in which we can further the relationship between the European Union and Ukraine. I am very conscious that Ukraine is an important state for us. It is very important in the context of what we are doing, for example, on visas and the regional dimensions – that Mr Brok mentioned at the beginning of our debate – that we are working absolutely coherently with our neighbours in the Eastern Partnership, ensuring that we move forward in a way that does not create an inappropriate imbalance for them.

Mr Fleckenstein, the civil society dialogue is reflected in the statement. It is of enormous significance, as too is, in my view, the move of Russia with the World Trade Organisation to now consider again the possibility of joining the WTO without the full customs union, whether that is just with Kazakhstan or on its own. I met recently with Deputy Prime Minister Shuvalov to see what more we can do to further that.

Georgia is a very significant issue. It is raised consistently. We raised it in our bilateral meetings at all levels. It is very important that we continue to work in Geneva to find a resolution on this and I pay tribute to Pierre Morel for the work on our behalf.

Finally, energy is, of course, a deep, significant, underlying issue where we need to retain a strong partnership with Ukraine and a strong partnership with Russia.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolutions<sup>(2)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on 17 June 2010.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) The partnership for modernisation agreement signed during the summit held in Rostov-on-Don lays the foundations for better cooperation between the European Union and Russia in the areas of the economy and investments. This may give some impetus to continuing economic reforms and establishing democracy in Russia. On the one hand, we support the position where the modernisation of Russia in the 21st century must be based on democratic institutions and values. On the other, we cannot agree with the draft European Security Treaty proposed by Russia. This would undermine the role of NATO and the OSCE. I think that it will only be possible to waive the visa scheme after Russia has met all the necessary conditions. At the same time, I wish to draw attention to the fact that if Russian citizens will be able to travel in the European Union without requiring visas before citizens in the states of the Eastern Partnership, this will send out a negative message to them. I wish to emphasise that the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have made considerable progress in meeting the conditions for waiving the visa scheme. The European Union must continue to be involved in supporting the countries in the Eastern Partnership.

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE), in writing.** – (RO) I welcome the outcome of this EU-Russia Summit as I feel that things are heading in the right direction. Russia has adopted a more constructive attitude than in the past, while, on the EU side, Baroness Ashton and President Van Rompuy of the European Council have successfully represented the EU. However, I would like us to be somewhat more circumspect in our relations with Russia. Russia is unquestionably a strategic partner of major importance generally from an economic, energy and commercial perspective. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that Russia does not regard the EU as a real partner and prefers to deal with more serious problems on a bilateral basis with the various Member States. We need to be consistent and show Russia that the EU can be coherent and that Russia needs to conduct discussions on an equal footing with the EU and not with Member States, which will avoid the possible risks of Russia adopting 'divide and rule' strategies. Furthermore, while I acknowledge that significant progress has been made, it is essential for the EU to insist on its values, especially the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Letting these values play second fiddle is tantamount to abandoning them and our identity.

**András Gyürk (PPE), in writing.** – (HU) Questions of energy security were less prominent on the agenda of the EU-Russia Summit that took place two weeks ago than had been the case in the past. This does not mean that there have been no developments worthy of mention in recent months. Not long ago, the question of the merger of the Russian Gazprom and the Ukrainian Naftogaz gas enterprises was raised once again. The Ukrainian president suggested that representatives of the European Union take part in future discussions concerning this merger. The European Commission, however – as we learned from the news – sees no reason to take part in these negotiations. Contrary to the European Commission, we believe that if we are invited, representatives of the EU should take part in the discussions on the merger, first and foremost because it is through Naftogaz networks that the gas representing one-fifth of our total energy consumption is imported by the Member States. Therefore, the merger of the two companies would fundamentally affect the operation of the European energy market, and thus price competition as well. We cannot regard the merger of Gazprom and Naftogaz as the purely internal affair of two companies, since we are well aware that national governments are also intensively involved in the negotiations preceding such transactions. Thus, if it is invited, the EU should also be at the table. If the EU is unable to have a say in decisions that affect its own role as an importer, then the common energy policy is nothing but useless, parroted empty rhetoric.

**Sandra Kalniete (PPE), in writing.** – (LV) The development of relations between the European Union and Russia is hampered by those serious problems associated with the fundamental principle of democracy and adherence to human rights in Russia, the independence of the courts and the mass media from the political executive, repressive measures taken against representatives of the opposition and the selective application

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(2) See Minutes

of laws. At the same time, it seems that the emphasis in EU policy is shifting from strategic partnerships founded on common values towards a pragmatic policy based on interests. For this type of policy, the strong and united support of all the Member States and its consistent implementation is especially essential. I welcome the Partnership for Modernisation between the EU and Russia launched at Rostov-on-Don and the gradual progress in relations. However, I should like to place particular stress on the need for the partnership to include a powerful chapter on values, to include adherence to the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must not forget the constantly growing interdependence of Russia and the EU in the field of energy, nor the important problems caused in previous years by interruptions to energy supply. To overcome these problems, we need not only legislation in the European Union on the security of gas supply, but also cooperation between the EU and Russia based on the necessary, but yet to be concluded, EU-Russia agreement on the early warning mechanism for energy security. I should like to stress that cooperation between the EU and Russia in energy matters must be based on the Energy Charter, which must be incorporated into the new EU-Russia framework agreement, so that we can secure visible and mutually honourable preconditions for investment and equal access to the market.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE), in writing.** – The Rostov Summit seems to lack any significant result. The modernisation programme looks like a nicely packaged substitute for the absence of substantial long-term cooperation. None of the official results addresses directly Russia's notorious failure to apply the rule of law. True, President Van Rompuy raised the human rights issue; however, this was not reflected in the joint statement. The conclusion, sadly, is that 'soft values' upon which the EU is officially based still remain on the unofficial level when dealing with influential third parties. While the joint statement refers to building a civil society and developing people-to-people contacts, the question remains: how can civil society be connected, if many of its activists face imprisonment or harassment just for voicing their opinion? That is why the EU needs to strongly react to the citizens' demonstrations in 40 Russian cities on 31 May that called for implementation of the constitutional right for freedom of assembly. Right after the summit, Germany and Russia issued a statement on creating a joint EU-Russia security committee. Such improvised bilateral agreements are bound to undermine the EU's role and credibility in the eyes of third parties to conduct common foreign and security policies under the Lisbon Treaty.

**Jiří Maštálka (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (CS) The 25th summit between the Russian Federation and the European Union provides an opportunity to ask whether the regular rhythm of such meetings does not lead to them being undervalued and poorly prepared. I do not want to undermine the importance of meetings between top EU and Russian representatives in terms of developing cooperation and eliminating the inherited habits of confrontation. What benefits did the last summit bring? It was the first such summit to take place following ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, I did not notice any new approaches from Brussels. There were a few vague promises about helping Russia to modernise and a declaration that the EU, in contrast to the US, had no need to 'restart' relations with Russia – it had only to proceed along a well-trodden path. The proposals from Moscow for the introduction of visa-free relations for Russian and EU citizens fell on deaf ears. Brussels said nothing, despite the fact that experience shows there is no risk of a hunger-driven migration from the East, and that the current system presents no obstacle to international crime. I note that an agreement was signed on visa-free relations between Russia and Turkey during the recent visit of the Russian president to Turkey. It is the same with the Russian application to join the WTO. The European Parliament should remind the people preparing these summits for the EU that the fulfilment of the Europe 2020 strategy requires better preparation. I would like to recommend that we consider arranging joint meetings between Members of the European Parliament and Members of the Russian State Duma, which would contribute to better mutual understanding and to the better preparation of summits.

**György Schöpflin (PPE), in writing.** – Russia still sees the West as primarily responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the chaos of the Yeltsin years. However, Russia faces a number of intractable problems, which ought to impel it towards the West, but Moscow's dislike of the EU persists. First, Russia's leaders have converted it into an energy-producing state, but, as energy resources are depleting, its economy is in serious trouble. The world financial crisis has led to a collapse of energy prices, resulting in a loss of revenue for Russia. Russia's population is collapsing demographically; it can barely mobilise enough soldiers to defend the country. In the mostly Muslim Northern Caucasus, Russia is experiencing an upsurge of violence. This violence is being met by repression, which means the conflict will continue. China has begun to challenge Russia in Central Asia, which Moscow has long regarded as its own sphere of interest. Finally, one area where Russia continues to perform well is in intelligence operations, as witness the rapid restoration of Russian power in Ukraine this year. This is a signal for the West. Russia will do what it can to enlarge its western security zone, regardless of the interests of the EU.



**Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I am astonished at the conformism of the compromise resolution on the conclusions of the EU-Russia Summit, which talks so little about the subject of human rights. I fear that this way of dealing with the problems regarding Russia brings nothing of use to future EU-Russia relations. Furthermore, France has sold a Mistral class warship to Russia, and I am convinced that it will regret its action.

#### IN THE CHAIR: GIANNI PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

### 8. Voting time

**President.** – The next item is the vote.

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

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**Robert Atkins (ECR).** – Mr President, I do not wish to delay the House long, but we have 43 pages of votes to take now. How much longer are we going to put up with the ridiculous state of affairs where this House cannot get its voting procedures in order? We were told we would start at 12 noon. It is now going to be 12.50. It will be a long time before we are finished. I ask you to invite the President and the Bureau to make it quite clear to Commissioners, Ministers and anyone else, that they should run their timetable round our procedures, not the other way round, and that we vote at the proper times as advertised.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to point out that the vote was scheduled to take place at 12.30. We are however running 20, but not 40 minutes late.

I would also like to congratulate, on behalf of the whole House, Mr Fidanza, who recently got married.

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#### **8.1. Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS-169) (A7-0164/2010, Lena Ek) (vote)**

#### **8.2. Structures for the management of the European satellite radio navigation programmes (A7-0160/2010, Evžen Tošenovský) (vote)**

#### **8.3. European Earth observation programme (GMES) (2011-2013) (A7-0161/2010, Norbert Glante) (vote)**

#### **8.4. Conclusion of the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (A7-0176/2010, Herbert Reul) (vote)**

#### **8.5. Authorising enhanced cooperation procedure regarding the law applicable to divorce and legal separation (A7-0194/2010, Tadeusz Zwiefka) (vote)**

– *Before the vote:*

**Tadeusz Zwiefka**, *rapporteur*. – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, this is an important matter. For the first time in the history of the European Union, we are going to set in motion an enhanced cooperation procedure. There are two things which I have to say about this. Firstly, I would like to table an amendment to update the recommendation, because after the document was drafted and voted on in the Committee on Legal Affairs, a change has occurred. Not 12, but 14 Member States have joined the enhanced cooperation procedure – Malta and Portugal have also joined. In relation to this, I would like us to incorporate this change from 12 to 14 in item G of the preamble.

I would also like to make a fervent request to the European Commission and to the Member States which are part of the enhanced cooperation procedure to promote and popularise this procedure among as many Member States as possible, pursuant to Article 328(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This is so that the procedure will not be used as a tool specially for making particular arrangements intended exclusively for a limited group of countries.

### **8.6. Adoption by Estonia of the euro on 1 January 2011 (A7-0182/2010, Edward Scicluna) (vote)**

### **8.7. Draft amending budget No 4/2010: Section III - Commission (2009 surplus) (A7-0200/2010, László Surján) (vote)**

### **8.8. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, Council (A7-0096/2010, Ryszard Czarnecki) (vote)**

– *Before the vote:*

**Ryszard Czarnecki, rapporteur.** – (PL) Just one thing – we are giving the Council our trust on credit, but this credit is not without conditions. I am sure that cooperation with the Council over the next year will be much better and much more effective than before.

– *Before the vote on citation 1:*

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, we are voting on the resolution on discharge, and Parliament recalls that we voted on discharge during the previous session. Unfortunately, one heading remained in the report. I will read it to you: 'Reasons for postponement of the discharge decision'. I propose that we table an oral amendment to remove this heading as well as the following heading: 'Further actions to be taken and documents to be presented to Parliament'. I think that this error is due to carelessness.

**President.** – Thank you. I think that your amendment is correct, and it is one that we would, in any case, have automatically made in order to bring the approval in line with today's date. I therefore agree with your recommendation.

### **8.9. Rights to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings (A7-0198/2010, Sarah Ludford) (vote)**

### **8.10. The organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities (A7-0137/2010, Edit Bauer) (vote)**

– *After the rejection of the common position:*

**Štefan Füle, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, the College will review, in the light of this vote, the possible options, including a withdrawal of the proposal. We will ask Member States immediately how they apply the working time rules to self-employed drivers and how they monitor compliance with these rules.

**Pervenche Berès (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, I understood from the Commissioner's speech that the Commission will withdraw its proposal, which we rejected. If so, then it no longer needs to be sent to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

**President.** – I understood from what the Commissioner said that this option could be considered. If this is the case, then clearly you are right, Mrs Berès. If the Commissioner confirms that the Commission wishes to withdraw the proposal, then naturally, the Bureau, which I represent at this time, will not refer the matter to the committee responsible. Can you confirm, Mr Füle?

**Štefan Füle, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I indeed said that the College will review possible options, including a withdrawal of the proposal.

**Pervenche Berès (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, in these conditions, and noting the degree of uncertainty confirmed in the Commissioner's response, I would request, under Rule 56(3), that this plenary express its view on the legislative proposal which henceforth rejects the Commission's proposal, and I would ask my fellow Members to confirm their vote by voting for the legislative proposal thus amended.

(Applause)

**President.** – You are within your rights to do so, Mrs Berès. The rapporteur has requested the floor.

**Edít Bauer, rapporteur.** – (HU) Unfortunately, I have to say that one of the possibilities is that an infringement procedure will be launched tomorrow against 25 Member States. I would like to ask that my name be removed from the report because I do not wish to contribute to this.

**President.** – There is, however, a proposal by Mrs Berès. I invite someone to speak in favour and someone to speak against. Who wishes to speak against Mrs Berès' proposal to put the rejection of the legislative proposal to the vote? No one? Who wishes to speak in favour?

There is no problem with the admissibility of Mrs Berès request under the Rules of Procedure, so we may put the proposal to the vote.

**Giles Chichester (ECR).** – Mr President, on a previous occasion when this House voted to reject a proposal from the Commission – in that case, a directive concerning oil reserves – it was referred back to the relevant committee because the Commission did not emphatically confirm that it was going to withdraw the proposal. The Commissioner has chosen his words very carefully. I disagree with Ms Berès's interpretation. It should go back to the committee until we know whether the Commission will withdraw its proposal or not.

(Applause)

**Emilie Turunen (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, I would like to speak in favour of proceeding with our votes today. Just to quote Rule 56(3): 'If the Commission does not withdraw its proposal, Parliament shall refer the matter back to the committee responsible without voting on the draft legislative resolution, unless Parliament, on a proposal of the Chair or rapporteur of the committee responsible or of a political group or at least 40 Members, proceeds to vote on the draft legislative resolution'.

It is very clear. We have asked to proceed. Of course we should proceed.

(Applause)

(Parliament approved the proposal)

**Hannes Swoboda (S&D).** – (DE) Mr President, the whole vote could have been handled differently if the rapporteur had kept to the committee results. Please could this be done in future?

(Applause)

### 8.11. Food information to consumers (A7-0109/2010, Renate Sommer) (vote)

– Before the vote on Amendment 48:

**Renate Sommer, rapporteur.** – (DE) Mr President, this is simply about clarifying the language used in the German version. No changes are needed in the other language versions. This is only necessary for reasons of legal certainty and concerns 'nicht vorverpackte Lebensmittel' (non-prepacked food) instead of 'nicht fertig abgepackte Lebensmittel' (non-packaged food). This is a linguistic change in the German version.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

– Before the vote on Amendment 130:

**Renate Sommer, rapporteur.** – (DE) Mr President, this amendment concerns labelling products that contain nanomaterials. I am fundamentally in favour of the amendment. I would just like to clarify that these must be stable nanomaterials. There are also unstable nanomaterials, such as sugar, which can be ground to such a fine powder that the particles are nano-sized. All the indications are that unstable nanomaterials do not harm living organisms. Therefore, I would like to see the following addition to the oral amendment: 'For products containing stable nanomaterials'.

*(The oral amendment was not accepted)*

– *Before the vote on Amendment 101:*

**Glenis Willmott (S&D).** – Mr President, I just want to move the words ‘of origin’ in this paragraph, so it reads: ‘the country or place of provenance’. That is much more transparent for consumers.

*(The oral amendment was not accepted)*

– *After the vote on Amendment 101:*

**Renate Sommer, rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, the first part of Amendment 101 has been accepted and the second part rejected. According to my understanding of Amendment 328, we therefore still need to vote on it. This also concerns the technical adaptation which forms part of the changes that we have to make following the Treaty of Lisbon. The term ‘comitology system’ must be replaced by the term ‘delegated act’. For this reason, I believe that we still have to vote on this.

*(Parliament approved the proposal – the vote on Amendment 328 was taken)*

– *After the vote on Amendment 295:*

**Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, actually, the EPP amendment and original texts change some things, but neither the EPP amendment nor the original text touch upon the issue of trans fats. Therefore, that corresponding part of 144 should still be voted, even if 295 is adopted, because trans fats are an important issue for many people here.

**Renate Sommer, rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, without wanting to get into a debate on issues of content, this is a question which has been resolved by the Tabling Office as shown on the voting list. The amendment tabled by the Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) aims to delete Article 29(1)(1)(b). Mr Schlyter is referring to something that was voted on again under point b in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, but which is numbered ba. Therefore, Mr Schlyter is of the opinion that this addition under Article 29(1)(1)(b) is an extra addition and does not, along with the amendment to this point, come under today’s vote.

I believe that we should follow what the Tabling Office has done. In my view, Amendment 144 must be dropped if Amendment 295 is adopted. As opinions differ on this point, but Mr Schlyter was fair enough to inform me before he brought this matter before plenary, I suggest that we still vote separately on Amendment 144.

*(Parliament rejected the proposal)*

– *After the vote on Amendment 145:*

**Renate Sommer (PPE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, we must vote on Amendment 339. This once again concerns the technical adaptation ‘delegated act’.

*(Parliament approved the proposal)*

– *Before the vote on Amendment 149:*

**Renate Sommer (PPE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, both parts of Amendment 313 have been rejected. Therefore, we must now vote on Amendment 149.

*(Parliament approved the proposal)*

– *Before the vote on Amendment 297:*

**Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, this concerns Article 31(3). The PPE Group wants to delete mandatory GDAs. We agree with the PPE Group and would like to vote in favour. Therefore, the authors of Amendment 314 have decided to change it, so it relates to Article 31(3a) (new) and therefore would not fall if Amendment 297 were adopted.

– *After the vote on Amendment 316:*

**Renate Sommer (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, we should not have voted on Amendment 316, because Amendment 316 falls if Amendment 313 is accepted. We voted on Amendment 313 in two parts and it was not accepted. I am sorry. I have made a mistake.

– After the vote on Amendment 346:

**Renate Sommer (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, you have just said during the vote that Amendment 346 was rejected. I believe that this was a mistake on your part. This also concerned the technical adaptation. The groups agree on this. I would like to ask you to query Amendment 346 once again.

(Parliament approved the proposal)

– After the vote:

**Joseph Daul (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, considering the time, I would ask that we simply vote on EU 2020 and economic governance, and postpone the rest until tomorrow, and if we do not have enough time on Thursday, we will stay on Friday morning.

(Applause)

(Parliament approved the proposal)

### **Commission's position on the proposed European Parliament's amendments to the Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers**

#### **Rapporteur: Renate Sommer (EPP)**

([http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/liste\\_resultats.cfm?CL=en&ReqId=0&DocType=COM&DocYear=2008&DocNum=0040](http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/liste_resultats.cfm?CL=en&ReqId=0&DocType=COM&DocYear=2008&DocNum=0040))

– **C 6 - 0 0 5 2 / 2 0 0 8** –  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oel/FindByProcnum.do?lang=en&procnum=COD/2008/0028>)

#### Amendments

##### Directly acceptable:

2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 29, 43, 51, 52, 55, 70, 71, 74, 76, 82, 83, 90, 95, 103, 105, 126, 138, 142, 163, 168, 188, 201, 217, 234, 240, 326, 329, 330, 336, 346

##### Acceptable in principle:

16, 61, 69, 84, 94, 98, 100, 119, 130, 133, 140, 149, 162, 183, 185, 189, 207, 226, 227, 228, 256, 276, 293, 304, 315, 323

##### Acceptable subject to rewording:

20, 25, 30, 31, 67, 72, 79, 97, 106, 134, 175, 182, 202, 203, 204, 210, 229, 255, 331, 333, 335, 339, 343, 344, 345, 348

##### Partly acceptable:

4, 5, 6, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 32, 35, 39, 42, 46, 49, 59, 60, 78, 86, 88, 89, 101, 104, 112, 121, 125, 135, 144, 146, 152, 157, 160, 180, 184, 219, 224, 225, 238, 243, 257, 258, 262, 286, 289, 296, 306, 310, 312, 313, 320, 321, 322, 328, 332, 334, 340, 347, 349, 351

##### NOT acceptable:

1, 8, 10, 12, 13, 21, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 44, 45, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 73, 75, 77, 80, 81, 85, 87, 91, 92, 93, 96, 99, 102, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 122, 123, 124, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 136, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 186, 187, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 205, 206, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 239, 241, 242, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 259, 260, 261, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 287, 288,

290, 291, 292, 294, 295, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 305, 307, 308, 309, 311, 314, 316, 317, 318, 319, 324, 325, 327, 337, 338, 341, 342, 350

### **8.12. Preparations for the European Council meeting (17 June 2010) - EU 2020 (vote)**

### **8.13. Preparations for the European Council meeting (17 June 2010) - Economic governance (vote)**

### **8.14. Proposal for a decision on the setting up and numerical strength of the special committee on the policy challenges and budgetary resources for a sustainable European Union after 2013 (B7-0295/2010) (vote)**

### **8.15. Proposals for appointments to the Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EC Parliamentary Committee (B7-0341/2010) (vote)**

**President.** – That concludes the vote.

## **9. Explanations of vote**

### **Oral explanations of vote**

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

#### **Report: Lena Ek (A7-0164/2010)**

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE).** – (PL) The Baltic Sea is a European asset which we all share, so it is important to take steps which will allow us to protect it from ourselves.

That may sound paradoxical, but some branches of the economy, such as industry, agriculture and fishing – if they are managed badly – can adversely affect the Baltic's biosystems. Therefore, despite the things which have to be done to benefit essential processes in the economy, it is our duty to make sure we care for and protect the Baltic, which is an exceptional natural resource. Neglecting the Baltic's biodiversity will harm those sectors of the economy which benefit from the Baltic's water. Therefore, supranational and cross-border cooperation is essential in this area.

Only thanks to joint research, including the participation of Russian scientists, can we create an effective system which protects the Baltic Sea and allows its potential to be used in an innovative way.

#### **Report: Edward Scicluna (A7-0182/2010)**

**Peter Jahr (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Estonia on joining the euro area. I am pleased about every new member of the euro area, because a common currency is an important integrating factor. Nevertheless, I would like to remind the Commission at this point that there are stability criteria which must be met. Sometimes I get the impression that existing members of the euro area have special rights. Rules are there to be followed. Anyone who breaches the rules must be punished. This applies particularly to the euro stability criteria.

**Siiri Oviir (ALDE).** – (ET) I have faith in the euro as a currency, and, of course, as the Estonian representative, I supported the adoption of the report and the adoption of the euro from next year. Our budget deficit is small and our public sector debt is one of the lowest in Europe. The government has made cuts wherever it can. The result – approval at European Union level – is well-deserved. However, I also voted for the report in order to thank and praise our people, the Estonian population. No strikes, no revolts, not even any griping, while tolerating high unemployment, a drop in pay – it has lived through all of this. This strain cannot go on any longer. We are hoping that the euro will provide relief, the beginning of a new upturn. Thank you.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** – Mr President, I voted in favour of the report, and first of all I would like to congratulate Estonia on the decision by the European Parliament to allow its entry into the euro area on 1 January 2011. The euro has experienced some serious challenges today; however, Estonia's entry into the

euro area should be a clear message to those who question the existence and prospects of Europe's single currency.

We should take Estonia's determination and consistent efforts towards its membership in the euro area family as an example, especially taking into account that Estonia's commendable performance was achieved during the global financial and economic crisis. Estonia's case should serve as an example to other Member States that are seeking to join the euro area, as well as to current members of the euro family, especially those who tend to underestimate the importance of the euro area's criteria and rules.

**Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0096/2010)**

**Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, the drafting of the report we have adopted today has been a painful experience. As you know, last year we completed the analogous report on granting the Council discharge only in November. This shows that on the matter of supervision of the budgetary expenditure of this fundamental institution of the Union, the European Parliament had, and still has, a considerable number of reservations.

Despite various problems and the very difficult dialogue with the Council, it is to be hoped that the credit of trust we have given the Council today will result in more open cooperation with the latter, so that the documents sent to the European Parliament in the area of budgetary expenditure will be more precise, so that this will happen earlier, so that at last, the famous 'gentlemen's agreement' – a construction from 1970, 40 years ago – will be revised, so that the European Parliament will gain a real and ongoing influence in terms of supervising the budgetary expenditures of the Council.

**Ashley Fox (ECR).** – Mr President, I am deeply concerned about the recent statement made by the European Council President claiming that Member States agree to submit their budgets to the Commission in advance of their national parliaments.

This was simply incorrect and it was a clear attempt by Mr Van Rompuy to bounce Member States into agreeing a further transfer of powers to the EU. Requiring Member States to first submit their budgets to the Commission would constitute a gross breach of national sovereignty. I am pleased that the UK Government has now corrected President Van Rompuy and is resolute in reiterating that the House of Commons will be the first to see and approve our budgets. This is non-negotiable.

Member States who wish to pursue further economic and fiscal integration should be free to do so, but it should not be forced on countries like the United Kingdom, who wish to retain their economic sovereignty.

**Report: Sarah Ludford (A7-0198/2010)**

**Nicole Sinclaire (NI).** – Mr President, I voted against this report, not because I do not believe in translation of criminal proceedings – it is, of course, very important that there is correct interpretation and translation in these proceedings. However, what this actually does is purport to add greater competence under the ECHR. The United Kingdom is already a signatory under the ECHR and it was incorporated into our law in 1998, as it is, I believe, across the European Union.

What we need to ask ourselves is why the European Union is going down this road. I believe it is going down this road – and I think we all know why it is going down this road – because this is another step on the road to statehood. That is why I voted against this. National governments must make these decisions. It is not for you: you are not a country. How many times do we have to say this?

**Gerard Batten (EFD).** – Mr President, I and my colleagues in the UK Independence Party abstained on this vote, but not because we have any objection in principle to there being proper translation services for those finding themselves in foreign courts. But to vote for this would mean endorsing the Stockholm Programme and the harmonisation of European legal systems.

As we have seen with the European Arrest Warrant, this means the destruction of the centuries-old safeguards against unjust arrest and imprisonment under English law. Worse is to come with trials in absentia and the common recognition of fines and confiscation orders, etc. Anyone who believes that national courts should have the right to protect their own citizens must oppose the harmonisation of the legal systems and the Stockholm Programme.

**Report: Edit Bauer (A7-0137/2010)**

**Nicole Sinclaire (NI).** – Mr President, I voted to reject this report and I am delighted that this Chamber has rejected it. I represent the West Midlands in the United Kingdom, one of the worst areas of unemployment in the United Kingdom. What people do in the West Midlands, as they do across the UK, is that we start small businesses; indeed most employment in the United Kingdom comes from small business and this report is just another attack on small businesses. Had it got through, it would have been an indicator that if you started a small business, you would be over- and over-regulated, so I am hoping that this Chamber and the Commission will not bring this report back to the Chamber and will also see its rejection as an indicator for further legislation not to over-regulate small business. We need revival in our economy, not over-regulation.

**Report: Renate Sommer (A7-0109/2010)**

**Clemente Mastella (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of this report since I think that European consumers have the right to know what is in the food they eat.

The Commission proposal for the reformulation of the EU's provisions on food labelling is clearly intended to meet the requirements of better lawmaking. Of course, it is designed to reduce red tape, offer stakeholders in the food chain a greater degree of legal certainty, improve the competitiveness of the European food industry and ensure that consumers are provided with comprehensive information about foods. While, on the one hand, it would make for transparency in the interests of consumers, on the other, it does not seem suited either to reducing red tape or to simplifying legislation. In our opinion, the Commission has made it much too easy for itself.

I support the rapporteur's proposal concerning nutrition profiles, which are indeed defined in detail, but do not have a scientific basis. What is more, the fact that the Commission drew up the proposal for a regulation without consulting outside experts is, in our view, mystifying. It is also mystifying that the proposal should have been submitted at a time when, although the results of piecemeal scientific research are available, a broad-based study covering all the Member States has only just been started.

**Peter Jahr (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, of course consumers have a right to know what foods contain. However, anyone who believes that the new labelling regulations will jolt Europe out of its complacency or that people will eat more healthily as a result is barking up the wrong tree. What we need is dietary advice and education, not only for adults, but, in particular, for children, and this is becoming increasingly important. People who have a varied diet and take plenty of exercise can eat a bar of chocolate with a clear conscience. This should be the message that we are sending out following our vote today.

**Mario Pirillo (S&D).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted against the amendments in the Sommer report which introduce the so-called 'traffic light' system. I believe that indicating fats, salt, sugars, saturated fats and energy content by means of a simple system whereby they are associated with a value would not give consumers correct information. Instead, there is a genuine risk of penalising ready-made foodstuffs, such as frozen pizza, which would bear a red mark on its label because it contains cheese. Paradoxically, the traffic light favours healthier products over quality products. Lastly, I do not agree with stating the number of calories on the labels of alcoholic drinks, including wine. The place of origin and provenance of products has been clarified.

**Siiri Oviir (ALDE).** – (ET) Mr President, I had my hand up to speak in good time during the speech on the previous report too (by which I mean Mrs Bauer's), and once I finish my contribution on Mrs Sommer's report, then I will also talk about that. I also submitted a written request, so it was not my fault that I did not get a chance to speak. Now, with regard to Mrs Sommer's report, the rapporteur has completed a very considerable amount of excellent work, and I am in favour of legal clarity, because the adoption of a single certain set of rules would replace the thicket of current norms. I therefore supported the adoption of the regulation.

I am a supporter of the GDA, because this marking gives objective information on how much energy and nutrients there are in a single portion of food. This kind of information is welcome in making decisions about consumption. However, I did not support the introduction of the colour code system. This system gives a subjective assessment of products, and does not give the consumer information on how to eat a balanced diet and how to eat according to one's needs. The traffic light system actually divides up foods into good and bad, but it would be sensible to speak of good and bad eating habits. Thank you.



**Report: Edit Bauer (A7-0137/2010)**

**Sïiri Oviir (ALDE).** – (ET) I appreciated Mrs Bauer's work. I am on this committee, and I saw how much effort she made and how much time she spent. In my opinion, there is no point in including the self-employed in this regulation, because the second regulation, namely number 51, will cover them, and in this respect, overregulation is not a positive thing. So I did not therefore support the Commission's blackballing of the proposals, nor did I support the rejection of the report. Thank you.

**Report: Renate Sommer (A7-0109/2010)**

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE).** – (PL) The basic idea of this regulation is to bring about a situation in which a single system of labelling food products will operate throughout the European Union. This will certainly be more transparent and comprehensible to all European consumers.

Uniform rules for labelling food will make it easy for us to choose the right product. When we are abroad, we will avoid uncertainty over ingredients which we do not want or the accidental consumption of allergens. Harmonisation of legislation at European Union level will ensure that the market functions efficiently and will liberalise the flow of goods. Let us not forget, however, that every change to the rules for labelling food products which is not preceded by a transition period exposes producers to the risk of very heavy losses.

**Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE).** – (LT) Today, Parliament voted on a very important document and I welcome the decision adopted. It is important for consumers to be appropriately informed and, as far as is possible, the information they receive must not be misleading and has to be accessible. With my vote, I tried to take consumer interests into account as much as possible, but we still must strike a balance between necessary and surplus information and find a balance between the interests of consumers and those of manufacturers. Therefore, I feel that the next step should be to set up a system or at least to encourage manufacturers to voluntarily provide consumers with as much additional information as possible so that we can safeguard public health within our European Union.

**Horst Schnellhardt (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the regulation is intended to provide better information for consumers and help in the fight against obesity. At the same time, however, it should also bring about a reduction in red tape.

We have achieved the objective of providing plenty of information for consumers with our decision today. It remains to be seen whether what we have decided on will always have the desired effect. However, I would like to make it clear that better information will not, of its own accord, result in healthier eating and a reduction in obesity. We will have to do more, and that includes this Parliament, to provide education and information, particularly in schools.

As far as the reduction in red tape is concerned, we have achieved exactly the opposite. We still have the nutrient profiles in the shops and we still have origin labelling in the shops. As a result, we have increased the amount of bureaucracy and overloaded consumers with information, so that they will not even notice the details on reducing obesity.

**Linda McAvan (S&D).** – Mr President, other Labour MEPs and I myself voted in the end for the Sommer report in the final vote because we feel progress was made, particularly in two areas: country of origin and front of pack labelling. However, we do have major reservations about the vote to delete national voluntary labelling schemes, such as the ones which are practised by major retailers in the United Kingdom.

These are totally voluntary schemes and, from all the evidence, consumers like these schemes. We will see what happens in the Council about the retention of national schemes. We hope that when it comes to second reading, if we cannot get agreement across Europe on traffic lights, at least those countries that have developed national schemes which work and which are well understood should be able to retain those schemes.

**Motion for a resolution (B7-0348/2010)**

**Gerard Batten (EFD).** – Mr President, I voted against this resolution. While there is no legislative effect, it nevertheless reflects the direction in which the European Union is heading.

It is a blueprint for economic governance of Europe by the European Union. As we have heard this morning from Mr Barroso and the heads of most of the political groups, this is precisely what they want. The current financial crisis is seen as a beneficial crisis to extend the power of the European Union.

I represent the City of London, which faces potential destruction from proposed European Union legislation. Economic governance by Europe would destroy the British economy as a whole. One sensible thing that the resolution did contain was Mr Pieper's amendment allowing countries to exit the European single currency. I was happy to vote for that but unfortunately, it was defeated.

### **Written explanations of vote**

#### **Report: Lena Ek (A7-0164/2010)**

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this document which will offer more opportunities to exploit the scientific potential in the Member States of the Baltic Sea region. The ecosystems of the Baltic Sea are under great threat environmentally due to natural and human factors, and science must be used in order to solve this. Hitherto, a number of research and development programmes have been implemented by Member States in the Baltic Sea region individually at national level, but they are not sufficiently coordinated at European level. I believe that the BONUS programme will become a good example and will enhance the Baltic Sea Region's research capacity and will include the scientists of these countries in joint action while contributing to the establishment and implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) in the Baltic Sea Region.

**Mara Bizzotto (EFD)**, *in writing*. – (IT) When national and EU synergies potentially trigger synergies between research, competitiveness and innovation, I believe that it is the job of whoever is responsible for administering and deciding to support the project. The report by Mrs Ek proposes interventions aiming to coordinate scientific research activities to gain an understanding of interactions within the Baltic Sea ecosystem, which are currently supported by national programmes. I will therefore vote in favour of this report.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this report because the Baltic Sea and its coast are experiencing the increasingly negative impact of various factors – pollution, climate change, acidification, stock depletion and a decline in biological diversity. Therefore, in order to reduce the pollution in the Baltic Sea, eight European Union Member States, including Lithuania, aim to undertake a Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme - BONUS-169. At present, in some countries in the Baltic Sea region, scientific research is being carried out at national level and corresponding programmes are being implemented, but there is insufficient coordination at EU level in this area. Therefore, given the severity of the current situation, scientific research programmes in the Baltic Sea region could be more focused and systematic in order to address the complex and urgent issue of the sea's pollution in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the financial support allocated by the Commission to the joint development programme will help the optimal exploitation of the research potential.

Moreover, this joint programme is in line with the objectives of the European Marine and Maritime Strategy and the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy. It is also in line with the new Europe 2020 strategy because investment in science and knowledge which will stimulate economic growth and the creation of new jobs is one of the main goals of the future strategy.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the BONUS programme, which will integrate the national research activities of the Member States and the European Commission on the environment and management of marine resources in the Baltic Sea.

The BONUS programme is a forward-looking model and an example for other kinds of regional cooperation in the field of scientific research.

Like the Baltic region, other regions such as south-western Europe would benefit from there being concerted action between the Member States and the Commission so as to address common challenges and support sustainable development in its regions.

There are research programmes undertaken by Member States individually in this region of Europe that could achieve critical mass in strategic areas.

I therefore call on Parliament and the Commission to consider the possibility of creating a joint research programme for south-western Europe, focusing on areas of great importance, such as the sea and energy sources from the sea, with a view to the sustainable development of the European Atlantic axis and its neighbouring regions.

**Robert Dušek (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (CS) The report on the Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme deals with the options for Community participation in research activities in the Baltic region, which have long been

carried out by the eight European Union Member States of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The activities are uncoordinated, however, and have an insufficient cross-border effect. Community participation should unite the national research programmes and the activities of the participating states into one joint programme entitled BONUS, supporting the fulfilment of research and environmental objectives for the Baltic Sea region, maritime and nautical strategies and the framework directive on water. I welcome the inclusion of scientists from the Russian Federation in the BONUS project, as Russia has large Baltic territories, and therefore has a direct impact on the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

From a financial cost perspective, BONUS does not count as a new project for the Community, as it ties in with projects sharing the same objectives, which have already ended or will come to an end – that is, ERA (2004-2006) and ERA-NET PLUS (2007-2011) – and it should carry on the work of these projects. I fully support the aim of securing funding from the participating states, which would ensure the sustainability of these activities even after EU funding comes to an end. I agree with the report as a whole and I will be voting in favour of it.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The Baltic Sea has known periods of great prosperity and activity, as when the Hanseatic League was at its height. It allowed for the fruitful exchange of people, goods and knowledge among various lands belonging to different nations. These exchanges helped to develop closer relations among the cities of the League and encouraged the rise of real solidarity, like that which Schuman was to advocate centuries later as the best way to ‘make Europe’.

The semi-enclosed nature of the Baltic Sea and the maritime traffic passing through it have led to the accumulation of large amounts of pollutants of various origins. These urgently need to be removed, or the whole ecosystem of the region will be put at risk. The European Union must contribute to implementing projects to promote maritime research and development in the Baltic Sea. Given the particularly serious circumstances affecting it, this must be a priority.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The Baltic Sea and its coast have been blighted by pollution, acidification and loss of natural resources and biodiversity. In the name of reducing pollution in the Baltic Sea, eight Member States of the European Union, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden will implement a development programme for the Baltic Sea called ‘BONUS’. This programme aims to support scientific development and innovation by providing the necessary legal and organisational framework for transnational cooperation between the Baltic Sea states on environmental research in the Baltic Sea region, which is in line with the EU 2020 objectives relating to research and knowledge. The Union’s participation will be as much as EUR 50 million throughout the implementation phase and will match the contributions of the participating states in order to increase their interest in carrying out the programme jointly. I welcome the European Commission’s financial support for this programme and especially the fact that the participating Member States will guarantee the sustainability of this programme even after the EU funding. I therefore voted in favour.

**Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world, so the BONUS-169 programme makes total sense. It is important to find out the reasons behind this situation and why pollution levels are so high. The EU must assign the utmost importance to the oceans, so that future generations can make use of all their inherent potential, which is to say, their present and future economic, social and scientific potential. It should also be pointed out that I agree with Russia’s involvement in this issue, since it is a major contributor to the pollution of the Baltic Sea. Only in this way can this programme be a success, otherwise it will be a vain and very costly effort that cannot achieve the stated goals.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – According to the report, a dedicated implementation structure will be set up: Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science, or BONUS EEIG, which will implement BONUS-169. BONUS EEIG will be the recipient of the Community contribution, but not necessarily of the contributions of the participating states. Even if the participating states will be reminded that the principle of a real common pot is important, each participating state will decide whether to administer its own contribution or whether its contribution will be administered by the BONUS EEIG. In conclusion, it is a good report, and we have supported it.

**Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), in writing.** – (LT) Ladies and gentlemen, the Baltic Sea plays a very important role in Lithuanian society. Most of our reserves lie on the shore of the Baltic Sea. For us Lithuanians, the Baltic Sea is really valuable from a logistical point of view – in particular, due to Klaipėda sea port – and also from a natural and cultural point of view. Unfortunately, as stated in this report, the Baltic Sea is suffering greatly from man-made dangers, for example, air pollution, climate change, stock depletion and acidification. The

Member States which are acting individually cannot be left on their own to solve the environmental problems that have come about in the Baltic Sea region. A joint action programme like BONUS is particularly necessary at present. Scientific research is the answer to the ecological, social and economic challenges experienced. The BONUS programme will create a positive common agenda for Lithuania and our Baltic neighbours – this close cooperation could also include political and economic issues. Although the attention of the BONUS programme is largely focused on environmental research, we should not forget the other benefit that this programme may provide. The BONUS programme may be of significant social and economic benefit and contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the Lisbon Strategy by investing in knowledge related to growth and employment. That would improve the situation in various sectors – fishing, tourism, maritime transportation and aquaculture.

**Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), in writing.** – I voted yes on the Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS-169) because I support the objectives of this project and believe that the current ecological problems of the Baltic Sea must be addressed. In addition, I support this project because it will allow us to accomplish greater joint cooperation and coordination by the participating states of Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden. It is my hope that by supporting the Joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS-169), we can achieve optimal exploitation of the resources and cooperation between scientists, tourist boards, regional advisory councils and local governments.

**Report: Evžen Tošenovský (A7-0160/2010)**

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) This proposal establishes the European GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems) Agency (the 'Agency') to replace the European GNSS Supervisory Authority (the 'Authority') set up by Council Regulation (EC) No 1321/2004 on the establishment of structures for the management of the European satellite radio-navigation programmes (the 'Regulation'). This change is due to the fact that several of the Authority's tasks have now been taken over by the European Commission. That is why it is necessary to revise the regulation so as to reflect the fact that the Agency is no longer responsible for the management of public interests relating to European GNSS and for regulating such programmes.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) Regulation (EC) No 683/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on the further implementation of the European satellite navigation programmes (EGNOS and Galileo) defines the new framework for the public governance and financing of the Galileo and EGNOS programmes. It sets out the principle of the strict division of responsibilities between the European Union, represented by the Commission, the Authority and the European Space Agency, and grants the Commission responsibility for the management of the programmes. Moreover, the regulation stipulates that the Authority will undertake the tasks attributed to it with regard to the Commission's role as manager and will act in accordance with guidelines issued by the Commission, which is obliged to inform the European Parliament and the Council on the consequences of adopting accreditation decisions for the harmonious development of programmes. I believe it is important that the Member States and the Commission are represented in the administrative board, with the powers necessary to draft the budget, monitor its implementation, adopt appropriate financial rules, establish a transparent procedure for the Agency to take decisions, approve the work programme and appoint the executive director.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) Amendments have been adopted to Regulation (EC) No 683/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the further implementation of the European satellite navigation programmes (EGNOS and Galileo) which defines the new framework for the public governance and financing of these programmes. It sets out the principle of the strict division of responsibilities between the European Union, represented by the Commission, the Authority and the European Space Agency, and grants the Commission responsibility for the management of the programmes.

In order to ensure that the Agency accomplishes its tasks whilst respecting the Commission's role as manager of the programmes and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Commission, it is stated explicitly that the Agency should be managed by an Executive Director under the supervision of the Administrative Board, in accordance with the guidelines provided to the Agency by the Commission, and also that the Commission representative on the Agency's Administrative Board should have 30% of the Board's votes.

Since the Administrative Board shall make its decisions by a two-thirds majority, this one-third voting rights will allow the Commission to block, with the support of at least one Member State, any decision by the Administrative Board contravening the Commission's guidelines.

As we have some doubts about what is proposed, we decided to abstain in the final vote.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The European satellite navigation programmes EGNOS and Galileo are a project which has been under way for years and which still does not seem to be making any real progress, despite the injection of huge amounts of money. Just as with the SIS II programme, the costs seem to be going through the roof. It is true that the Galileo project is of long-term strategic importance and this is why I have voted in favour of this report, with reservations, on account of the explosion in the costs.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – Easy vote, the one on the report on structures for the management of the European satellite radio navigation programmes (Tošenovský). We have supported it.

**Report: Norbert Glante (A7-0161/2010)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report in view of its implications for the future budget of the Commission and the contribution that space activities can make to the 2020 strategy for innovative growth in high technology, qualified employment and European cohesion. We should acknowledge the potential of a programme such as GMES – as is the case of the excellent work being done in the Azores – to support biodiversity, ecosystem management, climate change adaptation, fast-track services in the field of emergency response, land and marine environment monitoring or even transport policy support, not to mention the security aspect that it provides, namely in border control and maritime surveillance. It should be pointed out that these services are crucial for a ‘new economy’ in different remote, island and outermost regions, which, in counting on this kind of technology, which can be ‘exported’, are contributing not only to the creation of added value for those regions that are part of NEREU, but also to the creation of qualified employment and increasing the appeal of these regions through science and technology, in the hope of laying foundations and establishing new businesses.

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) For me, the European Union must be simultaneously conquering and protective. The GMES programme (‘Global Monitoring for Environment and Security’, an initiative aiming to create an operational capacity for observing the Earth) combines these two requirements. Since increasingly developed technologies are now available to us to effectively monitor our environment and thus ensure our security (in the case of natural disasters, pirate attacks at sea, studying the ozone layer situation or climate change, etc.), the European Union must invest in this field using all the resources at its disposal. Consequently, I voted in favour of this report since it provides a legal basis and funding for the GMES programme, which we need.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the EU’s strategic decision to develop a European Earth observation installation dedicated to environmental and security issues, led by the EU in partnership with the United States and the European Space Agency, with the aim of promoting better use of the industrial potential of innovation, research and technological development policies in the area of Earth observation.

GMES can bring tangible benefits for Europeans in terms of jobs, expertise, security and environmental protection. It is also fully consistent with Europe’s ‘EU 2020’ and post-Copenhagen strategies.

GMES is a vital instrument to support biodiversity, ecosystem management and climate change mitigation. It will also contribute to enhanced security, for example, by providing information on natural disasters, such as forest fires or floods.

Moreover, it will contribute to better management of natural resources, water or air quality monitoring and urban planning, it will facilitate transport flow, optimise our agricultural activities and promote renewable energy.

I believe it has the potential required to significantly improve the living conditions of our generation and our children’s generation.

**Ioan Enciu (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The GMES Earth observation initiative is an important project for the European Union’s future. A well-thought out financial framework is vital for implementation of GMES, as well as for the provision and use of the data and services. In this situation, it is especially important to ensure that sufficient funding is in place at the right time, both during the initial operations and after the completion of that phase, so that the data and services offered are available in a reliable manner without interruption. It would be good if the funding envisaged for the initial operational phase in the Commission proposal was increased, since this would enable commitment appropriations to be made for other areas of the space component. All EU citizens and companies must have free access to the data and services offered by GMES,

so that a downstream market develops, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises. Another GMES objective, alongside environmental and security aspects, is the promotion of progress and innovation. Free access should also be possible for companies outside the European Union, subject to reciprocity ensuring access to non-EU data for individual European citizens and companies.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The European space policy has been raised by the current Commission to the status of a key sector for the future of the European Union. In this context, the European Earth observation programme may prove to be an opportunity for the European Union in that it will encourage the development of its industrial strategy (especially in the space industry), benefit the public in terms of job creation and the development of research for innovation, improve environmental research and people's security and, lastly, generate synergies with other sectors, which may create valuable opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises. Development of this programme by the Commission will, however, require additional budgetary appropriations, which is why we believe it should be carefully assessed during the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The aim of the Regulation on the European Earth observation programme (GMES) and its initial operations is to provide Europe with its own capacity for observing Earth in the fields of the environment and security. Like the Galileo satellite navigation programme, GMES involves developing the European Union's own infrastructure, allowing better management of the environment and enhancing security for citizens. In view of climate change and in terms of enhancing civil protection, this is a very important programme. In fact, this regulation will provide us with the means to gather precise data on land, sea and atmosphere changes. It will therefore increase our capacity to prevent and manage major disasters, i.e. oil spills, forest fires, floods and landslides. This regulation only covers financial needs for the period 2011-2013, which is cause for concern. It should be noted that the ESA commitments for the launch of the 'Sentinel' satellites require precise and timely preparation and imply huge expenses for the actual launch, planned for the 2014-2017 period. It is therefore hoped that the Commission and the Council find a suitable solution to this problem.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The GMES Earth observation initiative is a significant project for the future of the European Union. It involves developing the European Union's own infrastructure, allowing better management of the environment and enhancing security for citizens. This programme could serve as an example of Europe's commitment to establishing a genuine industrial policy for the space industry and will create more benefits for society. It will bring more jobs, more security and environmental protection. It will create a large market opening for SMEs.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) When the EU has several large-scale projects under way at once, including SIS II, Galileo, pipeline projects such as Nabucco and the European earth monitoring programme GMES, all of which cost billions to fund, there is a risk that the Union will get bogged down. In any case, it is important to draw up accurate budgets and ensure that the funds are used efficiently. Forward-looking projects are important, which is why I have voted in favour of the report, despite my concerns about costs.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – Easy vote as well, the one on the European Earth observation programme (GMES) (2011-2013) (Glante), text that we have supported too.

#### **Report: Herbert Reul (A7-0176/2010)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, given that the aim of this agency is to promote the widespread and increasing adoption, as well as sustainable use, of all forms of renewable energy, thus emphasising, among its aims, which are vital for the Azores, in addition to conservation of the environment and protection of the climate and biodiversity, economic growth and economic and social cohesion, especially poverty reduction and sustainable and, above all, regional development. Adoption of this statute must take into account the fact that national and domestic priorities are safeguarded, although reference must be made to the importance of renewable energy for island, remote and outermost regions, in the hope that this agency will work towards energy independence for such territories and that it will contribute valid solutions for increasing use of renewable energy, particularly by supporting new tests and studies of the potential of this kind of energy source in regions that suffer more from geographical separation. It needs to be said that this agency, being European and international in nature, should propose solutions for these regions.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the approval of the conclusion of the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Renewable energy is one of the key issues for the future. Different countries have different approaches, in political and economic terms, to encourage production and use of renewable energy. Despite its enormous potential, however, the utilisation of renewable energy is still limited at present. There are various obstacles and they include long authorisation procedures for import tariffs and technical barriers, uncertainty regarding funding for renewable energy projects, and insufficient awareness of renewable energy opportunities.

It is therefore essential that the International Renewable Energy Agency fulfils its objective of becoming a centre of excellence for renewable energy, advising governments on drawing up national programmes for the introduction of renewable energy, dissemination of information about renewables and offering training activities and advice on best practice and financing options.

**Edite Estrela (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency, which will promote renewable energies and thus help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Today, when the European Union is adopting the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), I reiterate what I advocated on 20 October last year. My abiding concern has always been to limit our energy dependence, and I am sure that the way forward is to support and develop renewable energy, so I welcome the fact that Portugal is a founding member of IRENA. That is also why I support the European Union's endorsement of the statute of IRENA.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The IRENA, of which Portugal is a founder member, was officially established on 26 January 2009. The use of renewable energy is one of the main objectives of the EU's climate change policies. The IRENA will therefore help implement these objectives, particularly with regard to increasing the proportion of renewable energy to 20% of total energy production by 2020. I therefore voted in favour of adoption of its statute.

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) The European Parliament's adoption of the Statute of the International Renewable Energy Agency is good news for the entire European Union. Alternative sources of energy are the future, both for the modern economy and, above all, for efforts to maintain environmental biodiversity. Geothermal, wind and solar energy and the use of biomass or biogas are methods which can enable the European economy to become independent of imported energy sources to a certain extent while also making environmentally friendly use of natural resources.

Given the current global economic situation, and especially the geopolitical situation, I think that ensuring the energy security of the continent of Europe needs additional initiatives. Use of renewable energy sources is the perfect alternative to traditional methods, and also creates jobs, is cheaper and is beneficial to the environment. By adopting the Statute, Parliament has made a step in the right direction towards better energy policy.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (FR) At a time of ecological catastrophe, it is imperative to invest in renewable energies. From this point of view, the European Union's accession to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is a good thing. We need more than that, however, to preserve the common asset of humanity which is our ecosystem. Europe must urgently embark on the gradual withdrawal of nuclear power and must withdraw from the dangerous logic of the carbon market.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) As resources, such as oil, have been growing less abundant and becoming more expensive, we will increasingly have to choose alternative and renewable energy resources, such as water, wind, waves, solar energy, these resources being inexhaustible. These resources have therefore come to assume a greater significance on the world stage, and the creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is thus extremely important. That is why I voted as I did.

**Alajos Mészáros (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (HU) Explanation of vote: I welcome the fact that the plenary is devoting attention to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and am pleased that I was able to vote in support of it. I consider it important to set up as soon as possible an international centre that seeks to provide assistance and advice to 75 other countries as well as the European Union on the use and introduction of renewable energy sources, on planning targeted programmes, as well as offering training and advice on best practices and funding opportunities. I would also emphasise that the IRENA programme should be signed by all EU Member States (so far 20 have signed), so that everyone will be a member of this international collaborative effort and thus, through an exchange of ideas, we may develop even further our experience in the area of renewable energy sources.

In order to meet the targets set by 2020, that is, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and increase energy efficiency, we must seize every opportunity, and the Agency can be of great assistance in this.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Particularly during a period when nuclear power, which has received billions in subsidies, is being sold to us as a climate friendly energy source, it is important to promote the development of renewable energy, not just in the EU, but throughout the world. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is the first international organisation established for this purpose which can provide industrial and developing countries with practical advice and help. The objective itself deserves our praise and support. However, the way in which it has been implemented lacks clarity, which is why I have voted against it.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – This was not at all a controversial report for our group, which is the reason why we supported it with no major debates.

#### **Report: Tadeusz Zwiefka (A7-0194/2010)**

**Roberta Angelilli (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) I agree with the Commission proposal called for by many of the Member States to establish enhanced cooperation in the area of the law applicable to divorce and legal separation. This is an important objective in order to create a clear regulatory framework and provide assistance to spouses of different nationalities. The aim is to reduce the impact on children and protect the weakest spouse.

This measure will encourage recourse to mediation to avoid long and painful legal proceedings. As the European Parliament mediator for children fought over by parents of different nationalities, I am convinced that this proposal for a regulation will promote friendly solutions in the interests of children, by defining parents' duties towards them and setting out the best conditions with which to safeguard the well-being of the children concerned.

Moreover, the proposal promotes protection of the weakest spouse, preventing the so-called 'rush to court' where the other spouse tries to ensure that the divorce proceedings will be governed by a law favouring his or her interests. Above all, however, thanks to a European judicial network in civil matters, the proposal guarantees access to updated information on the key aspects of national and EU law, as well as on divorce and separation procedures, so that both spouses are made aware of the consequences of their choices.

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of authorising the development of enhanced cooperation in the area of the law applicable to divorce and legal separation. In fact, I am delighted that 12 countries have decided to move forward in this area in order to facilitate divorce proceedings for bi-national couples. In 2007, almost 300 000 bi-national marriages were celebrated and around 140 000 divorces were pronounced. This new procedure will give bi-national spouses the opportunity to choose the legislation that would be applied for their divorce. This will be the first implementation of the enhanced cooperation mechanism, which will allow us to move forward even if some Member States do not wish to be affected by a measure. The *Nouveau Centre* argues strongly in favour of using this solution more frequently to respond to bottlenecks created by unanimity.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted on this European Parliament recommendation because common rules on the divorce of citizens of different countries throughout the European Union will better safeguard the rights of couples of different nationalities or those living abroad in cases of divorce. The initiative for uniformity of rules on cross-border divorce cases is an historic event because this time, there are proposals to allow some EU countries to initiate a closer cooperation procedure in this area. Currently, the law applicable to divorce varies from one Member State to another. Thus, it is not always clear in which country a couple of mixed nationalities or a couple who are citizens of another EU Member State living abroad can get divorced. Given the legal problems faced by EU citizens when getting divorced, the new draft legislation lays down the possibility for both spouses to choose a competent country in a joint written agreement whose court will hear the divorce case, and a country whose law will be applied to the divorce. Thus, above all, given our citizens' rights, we must ensure that such painful periods in life as divorce do not become even more complicated and painful because of legal problems or the complexity of legal procedures.

**Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) Fourteen states, including Romania, have become part of the effort to promote enhanced cooperation in the area of legislation applicable to divorce and legal separation. Faced with procedural difficulties and major differences between regulations, these 14 states are taking a first step towards simplifying and standardising divorce legislation. Starting with the bare facts – 140 000 divorces with an international element that have complicated the action of the courts in several



countries – we can say that this is an historic occasion which entitles the 14 states and, later on, any other state wishing to be associated with this measure, to use the enhanced cooperation mechanism.

Europe already has common legislation with regard to civil and family law, except for three states which did not wish to join this arrangement. Harmonisation of European conflict-of-law rules will facilitate the mutual recognition of judgments in the area of freedom, security and justice in that it will reinforce mutual trust. At present, 26 different sets of conflict-of-law rules on divorce exist in the European Union's 27 Member States. The first step towards establishing enhanced cooperation has been made and will reduce the number of sets of conflict-of-law rules to just 14.

**Carlos Coelho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I once again deplore the fact that the Rome III Regulation adopted by Parliament in October 2008 has ended up being blocked in the Council. I welcome the fact that several Member States have not accepted this situation and have decided to resort to enhanced cooperation so as to move forward with this proposal. It should afford couples of mixed nationality or living in a country other than their own – at a time in their lives that is intrinsically very difficult for them – the chance to choose the law that should apply to their divorce.

We clearly need to have common rules, given that about 350 000 mixed nationality marriages take place in the European Union every year, and about 20% of all divorces in the EU have cross-border implications.

I therefore support the authorisation of enhanced cooperation between these 14 Member States, including Portugal. I hope the remainder decide to join this initiative, which helps to make the internal market work properly by eliminating potential obstacles to the free movement of people. I look forward to seeing the concrete legislative proposal put before us as soon as possible.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Given their particular sensitivity, matters of family law are exclusively the responsibility of the Member States. Even so, there have been several attempts to 'communitise' these subjects. The initiative to authorise enhanced cooperation in the area of the applicable law in matters of divorce and legal separation is yet another such attempt. I am aware of the legal issues and practical problems raised by the ending of marriages between nationals of different countries, and therefore I think this subject deserves to be treated with the greatest caution.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the adoption of this report, which will allow couples from different Member States, or who are residing in another country that is not their own, to choose the law that should apply to their divorce. In 2007, there were 140 000 divorces in the EU between couples from different Member States. In these proceedings, European citizens were faced with legal problems affecting their separation. I would also highlight the activation of the enhanced cooperation mechanism to which Portugal belongs, which has allowed this report to be taken forward, which was blocked in the Council due to differences regarding family law (for example, in Malta, a marriage cannot be dissolved by divorce).

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the draft Council decision authorising enhanced cooperation for 14 European Union Member States, including France, in the area of cross-border divorce. Indeed, at a time when the removal of borders and mobility facilitates bi-national marriages, and consequently divorces, it is essential for the European Union to acquire an instrument clarifying this procedure and protecting the weakest partner. The fact that spouses can come to a joint decision on the law applicable, and that, in the event of disagreement, it is the court seised that adjudicates, will have positive repercussions both for the spouses separating and for their children. Given that divorce is already a painful ordeal for everyone in the family, simplifying the divorce procedure can only help them. I also think, at least I hope, that this enhanced cooperation will be able to serve as a springboard to global harmonisation of procedures in cross-border divorces, because if it is used in a positive way, other Member States will join us in this initiative.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) While it is impossible to totally harmonise the laws of the Member States on divorce and separation, enhanced cooperation on the issue will enable significant advances, leading to greater harmonisation of private international law and reinforcing the integration process.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Divorce is always a difficult process. However, when the two people involved come from different countries, the matter becomes even more complex. It is important, on the one hand, that the national regulations are unaffected and, on the other, that we can achieve more clarity and legal certainty. However, this proposal will not result in a sufficiently clear situation, which is why I have voted against the report.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), in writing.** – I decided to vote in favour of this recommendation and fully support this historic occasion to activate – for the first time – the enhanced cooperation procedure. Whereas 140 000 divorces with an international element were pronounced in the Union in 2007, European citizens are still confronted with legal problems when engaging in cross-border separation procedures. It is our task to remove these inextricable judicial impediments and simplify as much as possible these intrinsically painful episodes in people's lives. Although my country, Lithuania, does not participate in this enhanced cooperation at the moment, I fully support this initiative since it represents a good example of how many EU citizens can profit in practical terms from being Union citizens. The European Union, its citizens and the internal market will directly benefit from this historic enhanced cooperation inasmuch as it contributes to eliminating further discriminations and possible obstacles to the free movement of persons. It will increase the EU's visibility and its legitimacy.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – This was not at all a controversial report for our group, which is the reason why we supported it with no major debates.

**Report: Edward Scicluna (A7-0182/2010)**

**Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) As Joseph Daul, President of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), stressed, Estonia's adoption of the euro on 1 January 2011 is a double sign of confidence: Estonia's confidence in the euro, a truly positive signal for the markets, but also the EU's confidence in Estonia, which will become the first Baltic State to take that step. This confidence is completely justified, as the Estonian Government debt ratio is the lowest in Europe. I therefore voted firmly in favour of this report recommending Estonia's entry into the euro area.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing.** – (LT) I am pleased that, despite being in a difficult economic situation, Estonia, one of the Baltic States, has managed to join the euro area. The Estonian example demonstrates that, thanks to balanced and focused policies, it is possible to achieve compliance with all the requirements for convergence. The fact that countries still want to join the euro area during the crisis shows great confidence in this currency. I am convinced that in Lithuania, too, political will and efforts to introduce the euro have not weakened.

**Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The Commission and European Central Bank convergence reports assess what progress has been achieved in Member States with derogations and whether they are now in a position to fulfil their obligations under Economic and Monetary Union. The convergence report for 2010 covers the nine Member States still with derogations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden), since the United Kingdom and Denmark have so far shown no desire to adopt the euro.

According to the report, of all the Member States assessed, only Estonia meets the criteria required for adopting the euro. This proposal for a decision thus aims at lifting Estonia's derogation from 1 January 2011. I voted in favour and congratulate Estonia on fulfilling all the necessary conditions, especially at this time of global economic crisis.

**George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), in writing.** – (RO) I voted for the Scicluna report on the adoption of the euro by Estonia on 1 January 2011. Estonia was among the first states that were hardest hit by the economic crisis. However, it has managed to buck the recession, with its public debt to GDP ratio amounting to 7.2% in 2009, far below the 60% reference value. Furthermore, the national government budget balance showed a deficit of 1.7% of GDP, with a reference value of 3%. This is why I believe that Estonia's accession to the euro area will strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union at a critical juncture and that its model for success can also provide impetus to the remaining Member States which still do not meet the convergence criteria.

**Mário David (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) It is with a sense of responsibility that I am voting in favour of this report and the proposed adoption by Estonia of the euro on 1 January 2011. In a difficult context of global financial, economic and social crisis, which has affected the prospects for nominal convergence of other Member States, Estonia is distinguished by its success in implementing a wide range of important structural reforms enabling it to meet the convergence criteria. The credible and sustained efforts by the Estonian Government and people can be seen, in particular, in the values achieved in the public debt, the lowest in the EU, and in the deficit which, in 2009, remained below the 3% figure set by the Maastricht criteria. Having fulfilled the accession criteria, as well as the other procedures laid down in the treaties, Estonia's entry to the Eurogroup should thus be looked on by its peers as a natural consequence and serve as encouragement for other Member States that are preparing to enter. Estonia's accession to the euro once again highlights the

vision, appeal and belief that the Member States that do not yet belong to the euro area invest in the single currency and its future.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) At a time when the detractors of the euro are having doubts about the viability of the single currency, the Union is showing yet again that this project remains strong and on course, retaining all its capacity and attraction for new Member States. Since Estonia has fulfilled all the Maastricht criteria laid out in Article 140 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Protocol (No 13) on the convergence criteria annexed to the TFEU, there is no reason to delay this Baltic state's adoption of the euro.

It should be noted that Estonia has fulfilled the criteria during a severe economic and financial crisis, as a result of determined, credible and sustained efforts by its government. Now it must maintain a policy of fiscal prudence. Joining the single currency is not an end in itself, as this crisis has demonstrated. The effort to consolidate the budget and balance public accounts should be ongoing, active and effective. I congratulate Estonia and its people and government on joining the euro area, despite it being a difficult time to adopt the single currency, and I hope they will continue with the convergence efforts they have made so far.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Considering the economic indicators and the sustainability of the public accounts of Estonia, I am favourable to its adoption of the euro on 1 January 2011. In the current context of global crisis and the constant pressure exerted on the euro by financial markets, Estonia's entry into the euro area is a positive signal that reinforces the importance and viability of the European economic and monetary integration process. I stress the example of stability set by Estonia, which has understood how to reconcile progress with discipline and sustainability in public accounts. Despite the negative economic situation, in 2009, Estonia had a deficit of 1.7% of GDP, while the overall ratio between public debt and GDP was 7.2% of GDP, far below the reference value of 60% in the European Union. In this context, I restate the urgent need to create effective mechanisms to monitor constantly and in real time the economic and budgetary performance of all Member States, so as to ensure compliance with the convergence criteria.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) We voted against this report, not out of hostility towards Estonia, but to protest against the fact that Estonian citizens were not consulted via a referendum on this crucial issue. Recent months have proved that the euro is neither a solution nor a form of protection, but a major contributory factor to the crisis. The last few weeks have demonstrated that ultimately, the euro area's problem is perhaps more to do with Germany than with what we contemptuously call the PIGS. Mrs Merkel, draped in her splendid arrogance, refuses to compromise in areas where she demands compromise from others. Everyone must stand by Germany, its exporting economy, its phobia for inflation, even when the policies that this imposes are absolutely contrary to the interests of its partners.

We can see clearly what this has led to in France: the sacrifice of competitiveness on the altar of franc-mark parity, then that of the 'strong' euro, budget constraints that exacerbate economic difficulties, an explosion in prices and a drop in purchasing power during the transition to the euro. Moreover, Mrs Merkel's Germany is playing a dangerous game by demanding austerity, which risks causing a contraction of demand among its main customers.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (FR) As a friend of the Estonian people, I do not want to see them suffer under the yoke of a Stability and Growth Pact and the associated system of penalties, which is soon to be strengthened. The draconian application of neoliberal policies advocated by the Commission has already plunged more than 20% of the Estonian population into extreme poverty. Integration into the euro area will penalise Estonian workers still further. I am voting against this report.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Despite the financial crisis and the attacks on the euro, monetary union is an indisputable reality and must be strengthened by the gradual entry of all Member States who are not yet part of it. The conclusion that Estonia, despite the international crisis, has fulfilled the Maastricht criteria and can therefore become a rightful member of the euro area as of 1 January 2011, is good news for those who support an ever stronger economic and monetary union.

**Claudio Morganti (EFD)**, *in writing*. – (IT) Although the path already seems to have been decided, the merits and timing of Estonia joining the single European currency prevent me from voting in favour of the report under consideration by this House.

Europe's economy is in crisis and experiencing turbulence, which should make us reflect on whether it is advisable, at least in the short term, for new members to enter the euro area. My opinion, which, with regard

to Estonia, is also based on social and cultural considerations, is supported by certain macro-economic data. Estonia was among the first countries to go into recession. In 2009, its GDP fell by over 14%, while industrial production fell by 33.7%, the largest contraction in the European Union. Nevertheless, this negative trend has not come to a stop.

Lastly, it is absurd that, given these data, the report put to the vote asks the Commission to simulate the effect of the euro area rescue package on the Estonian budget only when the country joins the euro area and thus becomes a member of the group guaranteeing the rescue funds. This information should, on the contrary, be made available as soon as possible, so that the Council can make an informed decision and anticipate future scenarios.

**Sławomir Witold Nitras (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) On 1 January 2011, Estonia will become the 17th country of the European Union to adopt the euro. At a time of crisis in public finances in Europe, every country which meets the convergence criteria is building the stability of our finances. Adoption of the euro means not only the convenience related to using the same currency in most of the Member States, but, more significantly, it also points to the existence of a stable and strong economy. The euro is the future. It brings a real possibility for development at every level of social, administrative and economic life.

Let us not forget, however, that the euro also obliges us to have a considered and balanced national finance policy. As an ardent supporter of the euro, I would like to congratulate Estonia which, in spite of the global economic crisis, has been able to meet the EU's criteria for adoption of the euro. I am deeply convinced that, along with our partner Estonia, Poland, too, will shortly have the honour of being among that group of countries.

**Franz Obermayr (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The significant progress made by the Baltic States, and by Estonia in particular, is very welcome. However, the question is whether this is the right time for the crisis-ridden euro area to accept new Member States. In addition, Estonia did not hold a referendum on this issue, which seems to me to be highly dubious from a democratic perspective. Therefore, I have voted against this report.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this report because I feel that Estonia really deserves to join the euro area. This small northern country has shown that even as the financial crisis rages, joining the monetary union is possible, if it is sought continually and consistently. I think that the introduction of the euro will be good for Estonia – it will increase confidence in this country's economy, will attract more investment and will reduce lending rates. This will also give a boost to the Lithuanian and Latvian economies. The symbolic value of this development is also important because Estonia is the first of the former countries of the Soviet Union to join the monetary union, passing the most complicated stage of EU integration. However, this development is equally important for the entire euro area. Despite the problems emerging in the euro area, the single currency continues to be attractive and capable of giving Member States added value. I am delighted that the Commission and the Council have praised Estonia's progress and hope that the European Council will also adopt a decision to that effect.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – This was not at all a controversial report for our group, which is why we supported it with no major debates. Moreover, it is good news to have another country, Estonia this time, joining us in the euro area.

**Vilja Savisaar (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (ET) Mr President, Mr Scicluna, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you for the support you have shown to Estonia in its accession to the euro area. This is an important and long-awaited decision for this small country. Estonia has put in a lot of effort in order to achieve this objective, and its people have also suffered a lot. At the same time, this has had a major effect on our economy. Unfortunately, I cannot agree with all of the decisions made by our government, which were made with an eye on the prospects of the euro. It is to be hoped that, aside from the coming of the euro, we will be able to start standing up more for the future of our economy, restoring public sector investments into infrastructure and focusing more on the development of the labour market. I would like to give my thanks to the rapporteur for a relevant and well-informed report and for the courage to stand up for the future of the euro area, and I would also thank my fellow Members who showed support in Monday's negotiations and today's vote. The biggest thanks of all, of course, go to the Estonian people; it is thanks to them that all of this became possible at all.

**Catherine Stihler (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I welcome this report and Estonia's entry into the eurozone. This has been long overdue and, under the current circumstances, should be welcomed.

**Report: László Surján (A7-0200/010)**

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE)**, *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Surján report. The implementation of the 2009 EU budget shows a surplus of EUR 2.25 billion, which mainly results from under-implementation of payments as well as from higher than expected revenues. In addition to distorting the result of the EU budget implementation, its direct effect is to lower the contributions from the Member States to the EU budget already in the course of the budget year. Without such an amending budget, the 2009 surplus would have been above EUR 5 billion, mainly due to under-spending. Annual budget surpluses have been increasing since 2007, despite those amending budgets presented in the course of the year in order to reduce surpluses. So the amounts at stake are very significant.

The existing disconnection between the resources of the EU budget and emerging needs and commitments creates budgetary tensions and gaps that jeopardise some other EU priorities, such as the Globalisation Fund and many others. All this means that either the EU budget was not realistic, or we do not have effective tools to implement and supervise budget implementation. The main conclusion is therefore that we should significantly improve our budgetary planning and other related procedures.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The total amounts [included in the amending budgets prepared after the conclusion of the provisional annual accounts at the end of March and] refunded to Member States since 2007 are as follows: Surplus in 2007: EUR 1 542 million; 2008: EUR 1 810 million; 2009: EUR 2 264 million. The total amount of the surpluses is the result of three factors: implementation of expenditure, implementation of revenue and variation in exchange rates. The surpluses are not refunded directly to Member States, but recorded as income in the following budget, in compliance with Financial Regulations. Effectively, the immediate consequence is the reduction in own resources to be collected from Member States. It is my opinion that these surpluses should be used to strengthen the following year's budget, increasing commitment appropriations, or should revert to a European fund for the financing of EU priorities. It is, in any case, important that there should be the flexibility needed to avoid these surpluses. These annual surpluses are, after all, the result of not having fully carried out the policies and measures advocated and foreseen for the development of the European Union. It is therefore my opinion that the final approval of amending budget 4/2010 should be seen as an opportunity to reflect on the budgetary reality of the European Union.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – This was not at all a controversial report for our group, which is why we supported it with no major debates.

**Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0096/2010)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution for the following reasons:

- I consider that, in view of the increase in administrative expenditure and especially due to the possible presence of expenditure of an operational nature, the Council's expenditure should be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other EU institutions as part of the discharge procedure provided for by Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

- I agree that Parliament's position is to reject the Council's statement that the fact that Parliament and the Council have not, in the past, scrutinised the implementation of their respective sections of the budget was due to the gentlemen's agreement (resolution recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting of 22 April 1970); I consider the gentlemen's agreement not to be a binding document and the interpretation given to it by the Council to be excessively broad;

- I believe that the preparation of the budget and the discharge of the budget are two separate procedures and that the gentlemen's agreement between the Council and Parliament on the preparation of their respective sections of the budget must not exonerate the Council of its responsibility to be fully accountable to the public for the funds placed at its disposal.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the Council's budget discharge. During a previous session, the European Parliament already largely rejected the decision proposed by the rapporteur to postpone granting the Council's Secretary-General discharge in respect of the implementation of the Council budget for the financial year 2008. This was the position that I took – alone – in my time in the Committee on Budgetary Control because the European Court of Auditors hardly makes any observations to the Council on its management. As a result, the European Parliament granted the Council discharge by postponing to this session the vote on the resolution accompanying the discharge decision with the

observations and recommendations made to the Council on the management of its budget. It is regrettable that the Committee on Budgetary Control did not accept, as I proposed, legal research to investigate precisely the rights – and therefore the duties – of the European Parliament on the subject of Council discharge.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** I voted in favour of the resolution since I am of the opinion that, in view of the increase in administrative expenditure and especially due to the possible presence of expenditure of an operational nature, the expenditure of the Council should be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other EU institutions as part of the discharge procedure provided for by Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. I agree that the Council and the European Parliament, in their capacity as joint budgetary authorities, should together institute an annual procedure within the discharge procedure with a view to improving the exchange of information on their respective budgets; and I believe that the preparation of the budget and the discharge of the budget are two separate procedures and that the gentlemen's agreement between the Council and Parliament on the preparation of their respective sections of the budget must not exonerate the Council of its responsibility to be fully accountable to the public for the funds placed at its disposal.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** For the sake of budgetary discipline and the transparency that the public needs, I do not believe that the Council is free from its obligation to publicly account for the funds made available to it. That is why I agree with the rapporteur's decision to postpone the decision on discharging the Council's accounts until the requested additional information has been submitted.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR)** It is regrettable that this Parliament does not adopt the same moralising and indignant tone and does not have the same concern for taxpayers' money regardless of whether it is a question of its expenses or those of another institution. Thus, it granted the Commission discharge even though, for the fifteenth consecutive year, the European Court of Auditors was unable to give a favourable opinion on the execution of the Commission's budget. Thus, it is pleased to grant discharge itself in the name of the gentlemen's agreement that it denounces today.

It forgets its own depravity a little too quickly: the financial involvement *in extremis* by an outgoing President to acquire an apartment in Brussels just before being replaced; the explosion of costs incurred by the reforms of the Statute for Members of the European Parliament and the statute for assistants, poorly evaluated upstream; the recent increase in funds and in MEPs' staff under false pretences; or even the provision of an iPad for each MEP. Certainly, control of the use of public money is crucial. However, we refuse to associate ourselves with the small war that you are conducting against the Council for political reasons.

**Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), in writing. – (DE)** I have voted in favour of the resolution on the discharge of the Council for 2008, as it covers two subjects which I believe to be important. One is the undertaking by the Spanish Presidency to subject to scrutiny the gentlemen's agreement between the Council and Parliament dating back to 1970, and the other is the commitment of the Council to be fully accountable to Parliament with regard to the administrative budget. The Council must rethink its information policy and ensure that there is more transparency, in particular, in the context of the current discussion on the discharge procedure for the new European External Action Service. For these reasons, I am supporting European Parliament resolution P7\_TA(2010)0219.

**Véronique Mathieu (PPE), in writing. – (FR)** Budgetary control is an essential responsibility of the European Parliament that MEPs do not take lightly. As elected representatives, we must be accountable to citizens over the way the European budget is spent. As reaffirmed by the European Transparency Initiative, citizens have the right to know how their taxes are being spent. The expenditure of the European Council, the institution representing the EU's Heads of State or Government, is no exception to the rule. This year, we wanted to clarify the discharge procedure for the European Council, reaffirming the powers conferred on Parliament by the treaty. While transparency is an important principle for the EU and efforts have been made to improve it in many areas, it is reasonable for the European Council to provide all the information Parliament needs to control the execution of its budget. This was the aim underlying the report on the vote on discharge for the Council this year. I welcome the initial progress made in this direction, although there needs to be more.

**Aldo Patriciello (PPE), in writing. – (IT)** I consider the motion for a European Parliament resolution with observations forming an integral part of its Decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008, Section II – Council to be vitally important.

The aforementioned motion refers to the Council's scant involvement in the discharge procedure, including its refusal to participate in parliamentary discharge debates, thereby revealing a contempt for Parliament's

discharge function, but especially for the right of the public and taxpayers to see all those responsible for the use of European Union funds called to account.

In my view, this last fact is particularly important, bearing in mind that the Member States represented in the Council are responsible for approximately 80% of the actual expenditure of the Union's budget. I fully endorse the express request put to the Council, as I think that the Council should provide detailed information on the nature of expenditure arising out of performance of its specific missions, and that its expenditure ought to be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other EU institutions as part of the discharge procedure provided for by Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

**Paulo Rangel (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution since I am of the opinion that, in view of the increase in administrative expenditure and especially due to the possible presence of expenditure of an operational nature, the Council's expenditure should be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other EU institutions as part of the discharge procedure provided for by Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – After the adoption of several joint amendments presented by the S&D, ALDE, EPP, the Greens/EFA and GUE, and the inclusion of many other individual additions, some of them coming from our group, we did not see any problem in giving our support to that report, for which we voted in favour at the end.

#### **Report: Sarah Ludford (A7-0198/2010)**

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the adoption of this directive aiming to guarantee the right to translation for people accused in criminal proceedings in the European Union. In concrete terms, this means that if you are suspected, arrested, questioned or accused and you do not understand the language of the country in which this happens, you have the right to have hearings, interrogations and meetings with your solicitor interpreted and translated. The goal is to avoid miscarriages of justice. When someone is arrested or extradited under a European Arrest Warrant, or simply arrested in a country other than their country of origin, they must be treated fairly.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this report because the equal rights throughout the European Union to translation in courts as enshrined in the new European Parliament and Council directive will increase the impartiality and efficiency of courts. Given that all EU Member States are parties to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, they should ensure fair court proceedings and correct legal standards. Unfortunately, in practice, these legal principles and 'quality' proceedings are not adequately safeguarded. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the right to translation in criminal proceedings will strengthen a person's right to fair proceedings and the right to be heard by a court.

Currently, human rights are often violated because a person being questioned or tried and who does not understand the language spoken in a certain EU country does not always have the right to translation or interpretation in court, because until now, such a right to translation in criminal proceedings was not regulated uniformly across the EU. Thus, in order to safeguard the fairness of proceedings, we must avoid problems due to a lack of language comprehension and must ensure that the accused understands what is being said while he is on trial.

**Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) From now on, EU citizens are guaranteed full rights to defend themselves if they are involved in criminal trials conducted in a Member State other than the one they originate from. According to the directive on the rights to interpretation and to translation in criminal proceedings, every stage of an investigation or trial will be translated and explained in the mother tongue of the suspects or defendants involved in trials. This measure improves the quality of the defence provided to European citizens, based on the recitals concerning the right to a fair trial anywhere in the European Union, which were unanimously approved. The directive therefore supplements the legislative provisions governing cases where European arrest warrants are issued in the sense of improving the conditions for European citizens who are defendants or suspects in criminal proceedings to defend themselves.

The translation and interpretation services offered to the defendant in a language he or she understands during the proceedings of an investigation or trial which this person is involved in will be guaranteed under the legislation of every Member State within three years. This is the period which all European Union Member States have to harmonise their criminal law legislations. According to the directive, the translation and interpretation services are concerned with cross-examinations conducted at police headquarters and

conversations with the lawyer, which also includes the translation of important documents. They also apply to decisions depriving any person of their liberty, the actual charge or indictment.

**Edite Estrela (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the draft directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the rights to interpretation and to translation in criminal proceedings because it strengthens the rights of suspected or accused persons in criminal proceedings. I believe it is important for the Member States to ensure that suspects or accused persons who do not understand or speak the language of the criminal proceedings in question can benefit from interpretation services without delay.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) We all know that for criminal justice to operate effectively, it must specifically lay down the rights of suspects and/or accused persons, so as to guarantee them an adequate possibility of defence through the appropriate legal and jurisdictional means. In this context, it is essential to guarantee suspects and/or accused persons the right to be informed in a language in which they are proficient about their rights and duties and the content of the charges brought against them, as well as everything essential to the case in which they are involved. This will be the only way to ensure an effective defence, a cornerstone of the rule of law and modern criminal proceedings. I also welcome the Council's decision to adopt judicial cooperation measures in this and other areas step by step, since safeguarding procedural rights is the key to swifter, more effective and fairer trials.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The creation of a space for freedom in the heart of the multiple realities constituting the European Union cannot be achieved without guaranteeing equal conditions for any European citizen anywhere in the EU area, specifically in access to justice, which is a fundamental value of democracy and of any state following the rule of law. For this reason, I support the establishment of a directive that guarantees common standards for interpretation and translation in criminal justice proceedings in all Member States of the European Union, allowing any citizen outside their country of origin the right to express themselves and to be informed in their native language, or in another language deemed acceptable by them, in police interrogations or in court hearings. Considering the importance of ensuring a more just Europe for the consolidation of European integration, I call for these new measures to be applied as quickly as possible in all Member States, and for the European Union to continue with the process of greater harmonisation in the area of guaranteeing rights and legal procedures.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) Mrs Ludford's proposal, in the name of the right to defence, creates an absolute right to the interpretation and translation of procedures for people due to be tried who do not speak, or claim that they do not speak, the language of the country in which they are being prosecuted. This will lead to an explosion in costs and the length of procedures, eat into justice budgets that are often already insufficient, and further increase deficits, much to Mrs Merkel's displeasure. This is quite apart from the fact that the planned procedures for obtaining this right will lead to an increase in the number of releases on grounds of procedural irregularity.

All of this in aid of a phenomenon that is an absolute taboo: the high levels of delinquency among foreign non-Europeans in all the countries that are subjected to massive immigration. The worst thing is that Mrs Ludford seems to think that no law enforcement or justice service appears to have already considered that it might be useful to have recourse to interpreters and translators, not just to carry out investigations or trials, but also to comply with the defence rights mentioned, which, in our democracies, follow from national provisions and respect for international commitments. This report is superfluous, and that is why we did not vote for it.

**Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted resolutely for the adoption of this text, which not only represents an advance in the area of defence rights, but also an historic adoption, in that it is the first European measure in criminal law adopted under the codecision procedure. I am very pleased that it was adopted with such a majority. This historic legislation granting all European citizens the right to translation and interpretation from the moment when a person is made aware that he is suspected or accused, subjected to an interrogation and tried in another European country whose language he does not speak, is a major advance in the progressive construction of a European area of justice. Moreover, I am delighted with the road map contained in the Stockholm Action Plan on the subject of procedural safeguards. The rights of people questioned in criminal procedures must be strengthened and, above all, we must restore a balance between the progress that has been made in terms of charges and the significant lagging behind as regards defence rights. In this respect, I am thinking of measures in the area of legal information, legal aid and information for close relatives or even for the benefit of vulnerable people, which are also necessary.



**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) After several years of successive failures, I am pleased that we are finally starting to progress with the implementation at EU level of procedural safeguards for suspects, safeguards which aim to protect the individual from arbitrariness. In cases involving EU citizens called in for questioning over criminal offences committed in another Member State, henceforth it will be possible to guarantee them access to the interpretation and translation of essential documents into their own language. The Europe of justice is on its way and I will continue to give it my support in the initiatives that will complete it in the months ahead, such as rules on interviews or even legal representation.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – The right to adequate translation and interpretation during criminal proceedings is a fundamental one and one which becomes increasingly important with enhanced judicial cooperation across the EU as well as more mobile populations. The Ludford report strikes a good balance and I accordingly voted in favour.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The European Parliament and Council directive wishes to establish a single area of justice with minimum common regulations and standards concerning the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings in the European Union. I voted for this report as I support the improvement in the rights of suspects and defendants who do not speak the language of the relevant country and do not understand the way in which legal proceedings are conducted. Anyone would be expected to enjoy these rights from the moment the relevant national authorities have given the person official notification that he or she is suspected or accused of committing an offence. I think that having minimum common standards for these rights ought to facilitate the application of the principle of mutual recognition, thereby making judicial cooperation operate more smoothly between European Union Member States.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (FR) This report contains some advances. It is essential to allow every suspect to obtain high-quality translation and interpreting services without delay in criminal proceedings. Sign language needs to be included in these services. Let us note, however, that translation into braille must not be left out. Nevertheless, I am abstaining on this report. It seems unacceptable to me that we think that only those documents which are deemed essential should be translated. Every suspect has the right to know in detail what documents speak for or against him or her. It is no longer acceptable that we can propose an oral translation instead of a written translation. Every suspect must be able to restudy all the elements of his or her file at leisure. Without this, a fair and equitable trial is an illusion.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The quest for a European Union as an area of freedom, security and justice has been strengthened with the adoption of this regulation. It is very important that a citizen of any Member State has the right to interpretation and translation of all documents relating to their case in criminal justice proceedings. That is the only way to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation between the Member States, and also the defence of citizens' rights, in a totally clear and lucid manner.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The establishment of a single area of justice with common rules is intended to increase significantly the trust which the Member States have in each other's justice systems and criminal prosecutions. In addition, there will be greater cooperation relating to the rights of individuals in investigations and judicial proceedings. The standards set by the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights must be observed. As the report does not go into sufficient detail on national issues, I have voted against it.

**Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PL) Considering it imperative to ensure that citizens of the European Union have a real right to a defence, I decided to endorse the report on the draft directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the rights to interpretation and to translation in criminal proceedings. It is part of the road map for strengthening procedural rights of suspected and accused persons in criminal proceedings, which was adopted by the Council in 2009. By adopting this report, we are making a significant contribution to improving the judicial protection of individual rights while, at the same time, putting into effect the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and their interpretation in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. Interpreting and translations should be free, adequate and prompt, which will significantly improve EU citizens' ability to defend themselves.

**Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (EL) Respect for the language of every nation is proof of respect for human rights and proof that a democratic state is functioning properly. The European Parliament has voted today in favour of new legislation that guarantees every citizen of the EU access to interpretation and translation in the event that they are involved in criminal proceedings in another Member State. Provision is also made, among other things, for this right to be granted at all stages of the criminal proceedings, for all

basic documents to be translated in writing and for suspects or defendants to have the facility to lodge appeals. Only thus will they cease to be at a disadvantage and only thus will the right to a fair trial enshrined in Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights be fully exercised.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – The Ludford report on a directive on translation and interpretation in criminal proceedings was adopted as such at first reading. Although I supported the GUE amendments referring to the regional or minority languages to be taken into consideration, these were rejected. However, the final vote shows huge support for the whole report (637 votes in favour versus 21 against and 19 abstentions).

**Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I welcome this progress towards fairer and more equal judicial procedures in Member States. It is a fundamental principle of any decent justice system that defendants understand what is happening to them, what charges they face, and the nature of the evidence against them. But I would like to add that it is not just defendants who need translation and interpretation facilities. There are cases where victims of crimes do not have access to full information about the procedures and processes around them in court. Victims' needs, too, must be addressed.

#### **Report: Edit Bauer (A7-0137/2010)**

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) For many of my fellow citizens, the enlarged European Union is not homogeneous enough in socio-economic terms to avoid unfair competition between enterprises in the 27 Member States. This is the case, for example, in the transport sector, where competition is strong. Besides cohesion policy – for which I fight on a daily basis, because, amongst other things, it allows us to reduce the development gap within the European Union – we need common rules within the single market. I therefore voted for the amendment calling into question the exclusion of self-employed drivers from European legislation on the working time of lorry drivers. Like my colleagues in the French delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), I therefore want to impose fair competition among all European heavy goods drivers and ensure safety on our roads by reducing driver fatigue. Following the adoption of this amendment, I voted in favour of the entire report.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I followed the recommendation of the committee, which adopted the report drafted by my Slovakian colleague, Edit Bauer, recommending that Parliament reject, at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure, the proposal for a directive on amending the 2002 directive on the organisation of the working time of persons carrying out mobile road transport activities. The report calls on the European Commission to withdraw its proposal and to submit a new one. It is regrettable that the European Commission prevaricated in its response as to whether or not it would withdraw its proposal. I also regret the position of the rapporteur, which entails rejecting her report to present an amendment that adopts the text of a complete directive. In reality, the real problem is combating the false self-employed in road freight. Let us hope that this file will be able to flourish in this sense.

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for the rejection of the Commission's proposal. The Commission proposed to exclude self-employed drivers from the scope of the directive. I feel that the exclusion of self-employed people would cause false work and would give companies opportunities to exploit drivers by not drawing up an employment contract but hiring them as self-employed people, to whom the strict working time and rest hours laid down in the directive would not apply. In order to ensure a competitive haulage market, the Commission must find a solution that would ensure equal conditions for all drivers. Parliament has frequently voiced concern over the current application of double standards for people with an employment contract and those who are self-employed. Such a situation distorts the principles of operation of the single internal market and poses a threat to road safety.

**Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted against the Commission's proposal; in other words, I voted in favour of self-employed drivers being included in the 2002 directive on the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities, for the following reasons. The first is that a driver who is tired constitutes a danger on the road. This is true whether or not the driver is self-employed, and whether or not the driver's tiredness is due to driving or to loading goods. The second is that only the activity of driving, strictly speaking, and activities directly related to it – loading, unloading, cleaning and maintenance of the vehicle, assistance to passengers or formal procedures involving police and customs authorities – are taken into account in the calculation of maximum working time. General administrative work – accounting, management and so on – is not taken into account. Inclusion in the directive on working time therefore does not constitute a danger to the activity of self-employed drivers. The third is that it was counterproductive to

try to define 'false self-employed workers' by means of this report. Voting definitively for the exclusion of self-employed workers from the directive on working time meant encouraging false self-employed workers and, in the end, inciting unfair competition.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (LT) I agree with the position of the European Parliament to reject the European Commission's proposal because the rules regulating the single market should apply to everyone without exception. The exemption currently proposed by the Commission which involves not applying the Working Time Directive on the road transport industry to self-employed drivers may encourage the registration of false self-employed drivers in larger companies, and this will lead to even more unfair competition in the market and will weaken the general labour market.

Self-employed bus and lorry drivers must be brought under the same rules on working and rest time as drivers who work for larger companies. I would like to draw attention to the fact that in order to improve the working conditions of all drivers and safeguard their social rights and guarantees, in order to improve road safety and also to avoid unfair competition in the transport market, together with the Commission we must take appropriate measures and present a new improved proposal on the organisation of drivers' working time. Therefore, we need legal measures to combat false self-employed work by drivers because false self-employment is a general labour market problem and it must be resolved accordingly.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (EL) I voted against the report because, apart from the obvious question raised in connection with the labour rights of self-employed drivers, there are another two important sectors which require particular attention. Firstly, the entire procedure of talks and decisions between the rapporteur and the Council took place without the approval of the competent parliamentary committee, inaugurating unacceptable practices which undermine and annul the role of the European Parliament. The second and, in my opinion, more important issue is that of road safety. In my country, there are tragically high numbers of deaths and serious injuries from road traffic accidents. It is our responsibility, as members of the European Parliament, to do what we can to reverse this trend. In this particular instance, we must vote so as to ensure that we do not permit tired lorry drivers to drive on our roads legally and without controls, with certain disastrous consequences and cost in human lives, as the European Parliament has permitted in the past.

**Derek Roland Clark (EFD)**, *in writing*. – UKIP voted against Amendments 1 and 29 so as to restore the Commission's intention to exclude independent drivers from this directive. We believe that requiring independent drivers to account for the time spent arranging their schedules and bidding for new business will be impossible to monitor, especially when this is done at home, as well as using part of their allocated maximum working hours per week. This will result in less driving, causing them to become less competitive and resulting in unemployment. UKIP also believes in the freedom of individuals to set up in business and to work for themselves, but this directive will prevent that from taking place. Since this is not a health and safety issue, the only winners will be big businesses.

**Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – I voted to reject the Commission proposal for a directive on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities. I am aware of the fact that traditional drivers attach great importance to their independence. However, voting against was the only way to force the Commission to come forward with a proposal to deal with the use of bogus self-employed drivers, which poses a direct threat to the genuinely self-employed and to other drivers in paid employment, by undermining pay and conditions in the sector. When we solve this fundamental problem, we can have another look at what is best for genuinely self-employed drivers.

**Cornelis de Jong (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (NL) Today, in the vote on the Bauer report, I voted against the Commission proposal regarding the directive on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities. This would mean self-employed workers being covered by the directive.

I am aware that the traditional self-employed driver sets store by being his or her own boss. In my view, however, voting against this proposal is the only way of forcing the Commission to hasten to present a proposal for tackling the problem of the 'false' self-employed. These 'false' self-employed drivers constitute a direct threat to employed drivers. After this fundamental problem has been solved, no time should be lost in taking another look at what is best for self-employed drivers.

**Edite Estrela (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted to reject the Commission proposal on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities. The Commission should accept Parliament's decision and amend the current proposal. All workers who perform these activities, and not

just employed workers, should have their weekly hours of work limited in order to enhance the safety of European road users and prevent unfair competition in the road transport sector.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Legal certainty is essential for the law to be applied correctly, which is why any amendment to a legal text that results in additional difficulty in defining its scope should be rejected as poor legal technique. Insofar as several doubts remain about the scope of the draft directive, particularly regarding the distinction between self-employed drivers and mobile workers, we share the rapporteur's view that it should be recast.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The competitiveness and viability of companies cannot be sustained with distorted and disproportionate rules relating to the values and general principles of employment legislation, given that such rules only serve to promote situations of unfair competition and job instability. In the case of transport, the possibility of granting exceptional status to self-employed workers, allowing self-employed heavy goods vehicle drivers to be exempted from a series of rights and duties established in the legislation for the sector, especially as regards working hours, would bring about an unacceptable situation of inequality and unfair competition with regard to employed drivers, as well as worsening road safety and increasing the risk to peoples' lives. I therefore voted to reject the Commission's proposal, as I do not believe that it contributes to dignity, safety, health, well-being or fair competition in the industry.

**Carlo Fidanza (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) I welcome the Plenary vote, which threw out the European Commission's proposal to revise Directive 2002/15/EC on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities.

In granting freedom of decision to Member States, this text would have effectively excluded self-employed drivers from the scope of application of the directive. The exclusion of self-employed drivers would have caused significant discrimination that would have favoured those drivers, giving rise to unfair competition between companies, which show an increasing tendency to use more flexible and lower-cost independent workers, leading to serious risks for road safety.

It should also be noted that Italy, acting in accordance with Directive 2002/15/EC, which provided for the inclusion of self-employed drivers from 23 March 2009, implemented this clause within the required time by means of Legislative Decree No 234 of 2007, imposing the same rules on self-employed and employed drivers. For this reason, I join my colleagues from the *Popolo della Libertà* delegation in wholeheartedly supporting the rejection of the European Commission proposal.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) It is very important that Parliament has today voted in favour of the motion – which we endorse – to reject the Commission proposal that would exclude self-employed drivers of buses and lorries from the legislation that regulates working time in this profession.

According to Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, whose position has been confirmed by this House, self-employed drivers must be subject to the same rules as employed workers for health and safety reasons and to ensure fair competition in the sector.

The aim of the Commission proposal was to amend the 2002 directive on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities. Parliament's rejection of the Commission proposal was carried by 368 votes to 301, with 8 abstentions.

With the rejection of this proposal, the 2002 directive (Directive 2002/15/EC) remains in force, according to which self-employed drivers are covered by the same rules as employees with effect from 23 March 2009.

We consider this outcome extremely important for combating social dumping, for defending the right of workers in the sector to health and rest, and for improving road safety conditions.

**Elisabetta Gardini (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) We find it absolutely unacceptable that self-employed drivers are excluded from the scope of application of the directive on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities. This decision would mean serious risks for road safety, which would be compromised not only by the over-long driving times but also by the drivers having to perform too many activities other than driving.

This decision would also lead to unfair competition between transport companies. It would effectively favour the use of independent workers who are able to offer lower-cost services due to their greater flexibility. The exclusion of self-employed drivers could also have the counter-productive effect of causing a fragmentation

in transport companies, with subsequent market distortions. To evade the directive, organised companies could, in fact, break themselves down into a myriad of small enterprises.

We also reject the compromise approach whereby Member States are left to decide for themselves because this situation would also pave the way for inequality between entities belonging to different states that exercise the same working activities. I therefore voted against the motion. Apart from anything else, stirring up discrimination in the mobile road transport industry is completely at odds with the aim of setting up a common transport policy.

**Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted resolutely for the rejection of the European Commission's proposal to exclude self-employed lorry drivers from the scope of the Working Time Directive in road transport. Particularly sensitive to the situation of drivers, especially self-employed drivers, I am very pleased with the rejection, because I am resolutely in favour of including self-employed drivers in the scope of this directive, given the significant risks that the exclusion of self-employed drivers presented, as well as the negative impact. There are 1.9 million professional road freight drivers in the European Union, 31% of whom are self-employed; I believe it is necessary to organise their activities in the framework of this directive to guarantee fair conditions of competition and to improve road safety. The Europe of today, which has had an unprecedented growth in the amount of freight transported by road and the density of road traffic in the course of the last decade, needs measures to promote safety on its roads now more than ever, and therefore needs a framework for the working conditions of professional drivers which, unfortunately, have deteriorated.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the rejection of the Commission's proposal aiming to exclude self-employed bus and lorry drivers from the scope of the Working Time Directive. Here, it is not just the health and safety of drivers that is at stake, but clearly also the safety of other individual drivers, since a tired lorry driver can become a danger to himself and others. I consider as scandalous the attitude of the rapporteur in this matter, who has continued to negotiate with the Council and the Commission without any official mandate. This situation is all the more unacceptable in that it seems to reflect the defence of market interests over the interests of the people. Social Europe must not find itself trampled on in this way, and it is in this spirit that my vote was cast.

**Peter Jahr (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Today, I voted in favour of the EU Commission proposal to exempt self-employed lorry and bus drivers from the Working Time Directive. This directive has nothing to do with them. There are already clear provisions on driving times and rest periods for self-employed people. The issue of road safety is therefore not a valid reason for including them in the directive. I very much regret that plenary followed the recommendation of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. This is a significant encroachment on people's freedom to do business and represents a huge burden for the self-employed people who are affected.

All of this is happening at a time when our main concern is supporting small and medium-sized businesses and reducing the amount of red tape that they have to deal with. In this difficult economic situation, the European Union should make every effort to help companies and not to burden them with even more regulations and bureaucracy.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE)**, *in writing*. – Including selfemployed drivers in the Working Time Directive is a prime example of how to make the situation worse regarding people who have little enough confidence in the EU as it is. I myself voted in favour of the Commission's proposal, and it is difficult for me to conceal my disappointment now I have seen the result of the vote in Parliament.

For example, in Finland, the country I come from, independent transport entrepreneurs represent the majority of transport firms, mostly employing one to two people. It would therefore be nothing less than a catastrophe if a 48 hour working week limit should also apply to them.

In the worst case scenario, this would mean that a vehicle could not even be washed or serviced outside this time limit. It is even more difficult to accept the decision that has now been taken, considering that self-employed drivers are already covered under the laws on driving and rest times, the same as drivers employed by companies. The result of the vote in Parliament thus has nothing to do with safety. Instead, it has more to do with the tactics of the Left and the Greens to weaken the position of small entrepreneurs, and we can only guess at their motive for this.

Regulating the freedom of entrepreneurship by using selfemployed drivers as an excuse is really quite sad, and, for example, this legislation will be seen as the reason why the costs of transport will have to rise for long journeys in Finland. In no other sector do restrictions on working hours apply to independent traders,

so why now should it apply to transport entrepreneurs? I can only hope that the Council this time will prove wiser in its decisions than Parliament.

**Marine Le Pen (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) Regulating the working time of self-employed drivers seems to us to be contrary to freedom of enterprise and to the very status of self-employed. We therefore voted for Mrs Bauer's report, which aims to exclude this category from the scope of the directive.

The question is: how do we monitor the working time of someone who is self-employed? How do we take into account the working time on non-driving work – administrative and commercial processes and so on – of someone who is not driving and who cannot be recorded by tachograph? Quite apart from the cost that implementing such a regulatory system would entail, this would simply be unsuitable and would deliver the knockout blow to a sector which is already seriously affected by the crisis.

On the other hand, we must intensify the fight against false self-employed drivers – that is, drivers who, while pretending to be self-employed, are actually disguised employees – and we must establish a precise definition allowing us to make a distinction between 'genuine' and 'false' drivers. Yes, we must fight against social dumping, but it is not for self-employed drivers to foot the bill for the European policy of opening up the transport sector completely to competition, and of cabotage in particular.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that the distinction between self-employed drivers and mobile workers is unclear, which may increase the risk of 'false' self-employed drivers, who, in order not to fall within the scope of the directive, are not tied to an employer by an employment contract, but do not have the freedom either to have relations with several customers. I concur with the rapporteur's view that there is rather a need for providing a clearer definition of 'self-employed drivers' than to include the genuine self-employed within the legislative framework of this directive.

I think that the Commission needs to carry out a thorough review of the report, which I hope will happen as soon as possible.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Opinions inside and outside this House on the inclusion of self-employed drivers within the scope of the Health and Safety at Work Directive in the area of road transport vary widely. Everyone believes that they have good arguments to back up their opinions and I respect that.

However, there are already too few self-employed people in Europe and those people who are still prepared to take the risk of self-employment should not be discouraged or demotivated. This is what we will be doing if we start to regulate the working time of self-employed people in Europe.

It is true that there is the phenomenon of 'false' self-employed people, but not only in the transport industry. This is a general problem throughout the labour market, which must be treated as such, as the rapporteur has so rightly said.

Most people use the argument of road safety, but the driving hours of commercial drivers are strictly regulated. The speedometer does not know whether a self-employed person or an employee is sitting behind the wheel.

However, it makes no difference whether a self-employed person who is tired after doing paperwork or an employee or driver who is tired for one of any number of other reasons is in charge of the vehicle. Restrictive red tape for small independent businesses is the last thing we currently need in Europe. Therefore, I have voted in favour of the report.

**Judith A. Merckies (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (NL) Lorry drivers can be employees, self-employed workers or 'false' self-employed workers. Workers in the last of these categories are actually employees and should have the same rights as employees. It was for this reason that, back in 2005, the European Parliament asked the European Commission to provide clarity via a legislative initiative. The rules on working time in road transport now before us do not regulate the legal status of 'false' self-employed drivers sufficiently and do not represent a solution to possible abuses. Therefore, I have voted against this Commission proposal while making a clear call for new, improved rules.

Genuinely self-employed drivers have a different status from employees, of course, and that is the way it should stay. Therefore, I should like the new rules we are requesting of the European Commission to do justice to the difference between self-employed entrepreneurs and employees. We need sound rules for working time in road transport that protect employees, eliminate 'false' self-employment, do justice to self-employed entrepreneurs and, together with the rules on driving times and rest periods, ensure safe conditions on the roads.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (ES) I voted for the amendment to reject the proposed directive on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities, because it sought to expand working time in this sector to 86 hours per week, which would increase the risk of accidents on the roads. The adoption of this directive would have serious consequences in terms of security, social dumping and labour deregulation. How can it be safer for Europeans that motorists, cyclists and pedestrians share the roads with heavy vehicle drivers who are completely exhausted? It has been proven that fatigue has the same effect as alcohol. The protection of workers from excessive working hours is a problem that goes back a long way. It does not matter if it is a self-employed worker or an employee who is exploited; it is about protecting them from excessive working hours that would lead to an increase in occupational hazards, hence the reason for my vote.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The report by Mrs Bauer on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2002/15/EC on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities largely concerns the issue of whether or not self-employed lorry drivers should be included within the scope of the directive.

This is a *lex specialis* to the general Working Time Directive 2003/88/EC. This special regulation is a sensible measure when it comes to protecting employed workers. Therefore, all employed drivers, including the 'false' self-employed people, are subject to the regulation, which is particularly important in order to avoid abuse of the system. However, it would be counterproductive to extend the regulation to cover self-employed people. This would put small and medium-sized haulage contractors at a massive disadvantage, as they are responsible for loading and unloading goods themselves. In addition, there is the paperwork. Overall, the result would be a significant reduction in the driving time for self-employed drivers, which would penalise them heavily. In my opinion, the small and medium-sized businesses which form the backbone of our economy are particularly important. The argument that lorry drivers would then work up to 86 hours per week and would be driving on our motorways while overtired is totally invalid, because the driving time continues to be limited to 56 hours by Directive 561/2006/EC. Therefore, I have voted in favour of the Commission proposal.

**Claudio Morganti (EFD)**, *in writing*. – (IT) My position on the report under discussion by Parliament is motivated, among other things, by the following considerations.

Directive 2002/15/EC, which is the subject of the report, does not regulate safety in the road transport sector but lays down rules about the organisation of activities complementary to driving. Making self-employed workers subject to the regulations under discussion today represents, first and foremost, a mortal blow to freedom and independent enterprise.

Secondly, obvious practical reasons make it difficult to enforce controls on effective compliance by self-employed hauliers with the provisions imposed by the directive. This ultimately means that it would be a pointless exercise to make them subject to the regulations laid down in Directive 2002/15/EC.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – With today's vote, the European Parliament contributed substantially to improving road safety in Europe. With the decision to maintain the self-employed in the directive, MEPs have closed a loophole to circumvent working time legislation. Now it is essential that this is enforced. Then, in the future, employers will not profit from forcing their drivers into false self-employment. The same rules will apply to all, which is common sense, because both the employed and self-employed are human beings who get tired in the same way and become a risk to their lives and those of others. This is an improvement for all drivers who do not have to work endless hours of loading, unloading and waiting, in addition to demanding driving times. We call upon the European Commission now to respect Parliament's vote and to call upon Member States to immediately implement the directive, so that now the self-employed are also included.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – (NL) Road transport legislation on safety and driving times must be the same for all parties concerned, whether the drivers be employed or self-employed. The basic Directive, 2002/15/EC (which entered into force in March 2005 for employed drivers), also stipulated that the rules were to apply to self-employed drivers from March 2009. Reversing this now would be a sign of poor management, and would mean giving in to the market.

Tired drivers are dangerous drivers, whether they be self-employed or otherwise. People must be protected against overtime working, which jeopardises not only the driver's own safety but also that of others. Self-employed drivers may be under greater financial pressure than their employed counterparts. If we

exclude self-employed drivers, transport companies employing drivers who are subject to compulsory driving times and rest periods will suffer unfair competition, and that cannot be the intention.

The present directive has proved that, if self-employed drivers are not required to respect the same working times, other drivers are forced into self-employed status in order to circumvent these working times. This is how 'false' self-employed workers are created, and this, too, is something I wish to combat. Unambiguous legislation must be brought in that lays down the same ground rules for everyone. Therefore, self-employed drivers must not be removed from the scope of the present directive.

**Catherine Stihler (S&D), in writing.** – The health and safety of workers is paramount, in particular, regarding road transport, because accidents affect pedestrians and passengers of other vehicles too.

**Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) Today, we voted on a dossier in the area of the protection of workers' health and safety, which gave rise to an important debate. The draft that the Commission submitted to Parliament proposed that the directive should not cover self-employed road transport workers, that is to say, drivers who work as freelancers and not for anyone else.

The report adopted by Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, however, proposed rejecting the Commission proposal. In my understanding, the two basic issues underlying this dossier concern, firstly, the need for a European definition of 'self-employed worker' and, secondly, the need for each Member State to make an additional effort to ensure proper contractual arrangements are made for workers who are not free to organise their working activities and who therefore ought not to be hired as self-employed workers. Although I believe that the phenomenon of 'false' self-employed workers should be addressed at national level through regulation, monitoring and appropriate penalties, I think that the debate that has been launched may help to move things forward in this direction. That is why, after following this dossier closely, I felt it was right to vote against the Commission proposal.

**Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), in writing.** – (LT) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like, if I may, to offer the opinion of Lithuania on this issue. Lithuania's lorry drivers have earned themselves a good reputation throughout Europe. They are the business pioneers and heroes of our young independent Lithuanian state, often separated from their families for long periods. Europe's endless motorways have become their second home. Yes, there have been reports that lorry drivers have breached EU safety and work regulations. However, that is not always the fault of the lorry drivers. Sometimes, their employers leave them no choice but to flout the rules. I have received letters from Lithuania's lorry drivers calling on me and the European Parliament to listen to them. They write that lorry drivers risk losing their salary if they do not alter evidence of the distance driven as displayed on their lorry's tachograph. Rest days – required by law – are often not granted or are delayed. Those drivers who complain are later discriminated against. These are clear violations of drivers' rights and EU regulations, not to mention the provisions of the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR) and the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR). Some have appealed to Lithuanian institutions but their complaints fell on deaf ears. More must be done to protect the health and safety of drivers and other mobile workers from the road transport sector. This is not simply Lithuania's problem; this is Europe's problem. Ignoring it may have fatal consequences.

#### **Report: Renate Sommer (A7-0109/2010)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of this regulation on food labelling because its aim is to help consumers make more informed choices – by extending compulsory labelling to other nutrients and introducing new rules on country of origin – and because this proposal simplifies, updates and merges into a single piece of legislation seven directives and one regulation currently in force on food labelling, thus making the law simpler. I also supported the call for handcrafted products and wines not to be covered by this regulation on account of their special nature which, in the case of wine, has already resulted in its own regulation. Country of origin labelling, which is already mandatory for certain foods, such as beef, honey, fruit, vegetables and olive oil, should be extended to all kinds of meat, poultry and dairy products.

The country of origin must also be indicated for meat, poultry and fish used as ingredients in processed foods. In the case of meat and foods containing meat, 'origin' must be defined as the country in which the animal was born, reared and slaughtered, and not where the meat is processed, as is currently the case.

**Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) The proposal on food labelling does not seek to protect consumers, as the EU asserts. It lays down terms of competition imposed by the monopoly companies at the expense of consumers, workers and farmers. The right of consumers to know what they are consuming



is not satisfied by labelling products and, more to the point, their right to healthy, safe and quality food is not safeguarded. Consumers are not necessarily familiar with constantly evolving technological and scientific applications, nor do they understand the corresponding labels, the properties of food and the units of measurement of the various sizes. The responsibility of the state, of national legislation and of the mechanisms to control its application, which should ensure that the food marketed is safe and healthy, cannot be personalised and shifted to individual consumers, who are required to decide if a food product is good or bad for their health and whether or not it is nutritionally beneficial.

The recurring food scandals caused by the unaccountability of the multinational companies which produce, process and market foods are not due to poor labelling; they are due to capitalist production itself, which only obeys the law of profit. The contemporary need for healthy food can only be satisfied by changing the method of production and the purpose of food production.

**Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) I voted for the Sommer report because it represents a balanced compromise between consumer information, which should not be excessive at the risk of being counterproductive and too costly, and a lack of information, which would risk harming the quality of the choices made by the consumer. In particular, I am delighted that the European Parliament has rejected the principle of a traffic light scheme which is supposed to indicate the level of danger to health posed by food. Everyone knows very well that a little chocolate and a little wine is good for you. Too much chocolate and too much wine is bad. A green-amber-red colour code would not have made any sense. Once again, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) has made the European Parliament listen to reason...

**Liam Aylward (ALDE), in writing.** – (GA) Consumers have a right to clear, comprehensible information about the food products they purchase and have a right to know in which country those goods were produced.

Clearer rules on the labelling of pre-packaged food will help consumers who are trying to make the right decision and purchase healthy food. As it is estimated that 20% of Europe's population will be classed as obese by the end of this year, it is clear that measures should be put in place to encourage balanced diets.

However, a balance must be achieved between providing good, clear information and putting too much information on labels, which would confuse consumers. Food labelling should not place too much of a burden on the food sector, particularly on small and local producers. European consumers appreciate the high-quality food being produced by European farmers, and clear information about the country in which the goods were produced should be included on labels. This type of labelling of meat, poultry, vegetables and fruit is necessary to ensure that consumers are not being misled.

**Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) As part of the report drafted by Renate Sommer on the 'Provision of food information to consumers', I voted for Amendment 351 as consumers must be correctly informed about the country of origin of food products. For this reason, I supported the compulsory indication of the country of origin on labelling for meat, milk, vegetables, fruit and products containing a single ingredient.

Firstly, we must ensure that European citizens are afforded better protection and are not misled about a food product being produced in a particular Member State when it actually originates from another country. This will enable consumers to choose any product, fully aware of all the facts and eat products of a particular origin and quality. Secondly, better labelling can reduce the incidence of tax evasion.

**Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) Combining the European regulations governing packaged food labelling will offer consumers the chance to make an enlightened choice, without causing complications or making producers commit major financial resources. The European Parliament's debate on Wednesday about product labelling generated so much interest among MEPs because it affects each and every one of us. We live in a world which is dominated by unhealthy lifestyles where obesity and cardiovascular conditions have reached epidemic proportions and are threatening the state of health across Europe. It is therefore important for every consumer to make an informed choice when opting for certain food products. Standardising regulations at European level and displaying in a visible place the amount of lipids, saturated fatty acids and sugar the products contain, along with their energy content, will overcome the linguistic barriers which some consumers could use as an argument.

The decision made by the European Parliament this week highlights that it understands the need to protect European consumers and recognises the importance of making informed decisions. Once the new regulations have been implemented, it remains up to consumers to choose what they wish to consume. I sincerely hope

that these regulations will quickly pass through the EU's institutional procedures and become mandatory in the near future.

**John Bufton, David Campbell Bannerman and Nigel Farage (EFD)**, *in writing*. – UKIP voted against the Sommer Report in the European Parliament because it is a sloppily-drafted dog's dinner which does not clearly support country of origin labelling for simple foods like meats and eggs. UKIP policy is to support country of origin labelling to help producers selling their goods and for consumers to know with certainty where their food is coming from. We have rejected the report because it fails to defend the interests of farmers and consumers, while allowing large retailers to confuse the consumer. The rapporteur herself has stated she is afraid the proposal is moving too fast. UKIP believe MEPs are acting without sufficient information on this matter.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Consumers have the right to know what is contained in the foodstuffs they consume. For this reason, information on the composition and nutritional value of food products is indispensable, as it constitutes the primary factor in allowing the consumer to make specific choices.

The aim of the Commission's proposal concerning the reformulation of EU legislation applicable to food product labelling is to simplify the existing framework for this purpose. The proposal also aims to provide stakeholders in the food chain with greater legal certainty, increasing the competitiveness of the European food industry and guaranteeing food safety, as well as provide consumers with complete information on food products and encourage healthy eating as an element in the European Union's strategy for tackling the obesity problem.

I welcome the following fundamental proposals contained in the regulation:

- All mandatory information must be shown in a minimum font size of 3 mm.
- A comprehensive nutritional declaration in the 'principal field of vision' of the packaging is to be introduced.
- Mandatory particulars relating to the energy value of the food and its content of fats, saturated fatty acids and carbohydrates, with specific reference to sugars and salt, must be given in the appropriate order on the front of the package.

I call on the Member States to adopt these standards in the ...

(Statement abbreviated in accordance with Article 170(1) of the Rules of Procedure)

**Jorgo Chatzimarkakis (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Providing consumers with information about food is undoubtedly important. However, the debate in Brussels has become a lobbying battle between large companies from the food industry and consumer protection organisations. There was no place in this debate for the reality of everyday life for consumers. The representatives of the German Free Democratic Party in the European Parliament are in favour of a minimum of labelling. Consumers should be able to make their purchasing decisions on the basis of transparent, legible information. Colour coded labelling influences consumers and does not form the basis for transparent information. The so-called guideline daily amounts (GDAs) also have their weak points. Instead of having neutral information about the amounts of nutrients per 100 grams or millilitres printed legibly on packaging, Parliament discussed whether the daily requirements of a 40-year-old woman could be used as the point of reference or whether the colour coding of nutrients was a useful decision-making tool.

The proposed, far-reaching, mandatory requirements for the origin labelling of ingredients cannot be implemented in practice. We have also rejected the idea of special national provisions, because the labelling system should, as far as possible, be standardised. For these reasons, we were not able to vote in favour of the proposed report.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (EL) There are huge risks to health (obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and certain types of cancer) from uncontrolled products and a lack of information, misinformation and misleading consumers. Nonetheless, the food industry spends approximately USD 10 billion a year to influence children's eating habits. The modern consumer's uncertainty as to the quality of food must stop. The amendments tabled by the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left were intended to help consumers know what they are eating, so that they can make the right choices.

It is the responsibility of the European Parliament, as co-legislator, to adopt legislation which does not mislead consumers and does not put their health at risk. I voted against the report, because the amendments adopted unfortunately proved that interdependent interests are stronger than consumer safety and the food industry, one of the biggest investors in advertising, has acquired control by intervening in production and consumption.

**Derek Roland Clark (EFD)**, *in writing*. – UKIP voted against the Sommer report in the European Parliament because it is badly drafted, with inadequate definitions. The country of origin statement was badly worded, giving rise to confusion. UKIP policy is to support country of origin labelling to help producers and consumers to know with certainty where their food is coming from. We rejected the report because it fails to defend the interests of farmers and consumers, while allowing large retailers to confuse the public. UKIP believes MEPs are acting without sufficient information on this matter.

**Lara Comi (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of this report, although I am still a little puzzled about certain aspects.

I believe it is essential to simplify the labelling of food products to allow a better understanding of ingredients, methods of use and traceability by consumers. I do not, however, agree with the methods by which we should achieve this aim. Product buying awareness is not increased by indicating nutritional profiles, guidelines and the traffic light system. There are no scientific grounds for such methods and they cannot therefore be considered reliable. I am therefore pleased that the traffic light system has been thrown out but not so pleased by the adoption of the nutritional profiles and guidelines.

Lastly, I approve the adoption of the amendment calling for the provenance of some food products to be specified. I am a firm believer in indicating product origin because I believe it is essential to inform consumers about the provenance of what they are buying. I hope that during second reading, it is possible to agree on a text that is more acceptable to everyone and which offers a better balance between the interests at stake: health on the one hand and the food industries on the other.

**Jurgen Creutzmann (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Along with the majority of Members in the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I have decided to vote in favour of the Sommer report. It is true that the Liberals were not able to achieve their goals in every area. The adoption of origin labelling for meat and milk in processed products is a regrettable move, because it imposes significant costs on producers and seems almost impossible to implement in practice. However, for me, the positive results of the vote clearly outweigh the negative ones. For the first time, we have uniform regulations on food labelling throughout the entire internal market, with no possibility of individual countries going it alone. In addition, one of the decisive successes of this vote for me is the fact that the misleading traffic light model was rejected.

A mandatory colour coded nutrient declaration will not be permitted either at a European or a national level. Uniform Europe-wide labelling rules will bring clear advantages for companies and consumers. The cost of manufacturing and selling products will fall because manufacturers will only have to follow a single regulation. Consumers will benefit from uniform nutrient labelling when comparing products that come from within Europe.

**Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) We are aware that there is a European consumer policy for protecting them. Its aim is to apply standard regulations at a high level across the whole of the European Union. However, consumers need to have clear, comprehensible information about food products' essential nutritional aspects, thereby allowing them to make fully informed choices. In addition, I believe that the need to adopt a new regulation for informing consumers about food products arises as part of a general effort to raise awareness about the importance of switching to a healthier diet and make consumers increasingly sensitive to the content of food products. I think that this will also encourage both agricultural producers and industrial groups to adopt measures aimed at improving product labelling in response to consumers' demands. The information printed on a label must not mislead consumers when they are buying food products, in terms of the food's characteristics, especially its nature, identity, properties, composition, quantity, shelf-life, origin or provenance, as well as its methods of manufacture or production. As Hippocrates also said: 'Our food should be our medicine. Our medicine should be our food'.

**Mário David (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) A standardised labelling system for foodstuffs in the internal market is not only vital and necessary in order to guarantee the European consumer high levels of food safety, but also an important instrument for the competitiveness of companies in this sector in trade within the EU. I am therefore voting overall in favour of the amendments proposed by the rapporteur. I endorse the rejection of the 'traffic light' system as a means of providing information on the levels of fats, carbohydrates and proteins and support the adoption of an EU-wide labelling system that is simple, transparent and easy to

understand. Making information on the composition and nutritional value of foods, as well as on the principal nutritional ingredients and their respective energy values, available to consumers is essential in helping them make a conscious and informed choice and purchase. I am therefore of the opinion that the Commission has adopted a paternalistic approach to this subject by trying to guide consumers in their choices rather than informing them. I also believe, however, that neither direct marketing by farmers nor local and regional products should be subject to these regulations, as it is these products that contribute to the diversity of European gastronomic culture.

**Luigi Ciriaco De Mita (PPE), in writing. – (IT)** This proposal for a regulation is blazing a legislative trail on a subject that is fundamental for European Union citizens and enterprises, namely the transparency and dissemination of information on food products.

While, on the one hand, it is important to achieve an internal market where all citizens and all enterprises can make the best possible choices, on the other hand, we must take into account the extraordinary heritage of food, wine and gastronomic culture that moulds the traditions of many parts of Europe, thus benefiting health and also economic, social and environmental sustainability.

During the process of amending the proposal, both in detail and in broad terms, it has become apparent that the European Parliament, in performing this function so fundamental to the exercising of its responsibilities, is turning into a place where the interest of multinationals are transacted to the detriment of consumers.

When faced by this inequality of power, which should be balanced out by the pursuit of public interest by the institution, we can only marvel at the growing public disinterest in the process of European integration. These observations are not motivated by national interests but by the judiciousness of preserving typical local food products and the strong local bond between producers and consumers.

**Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR)** I voted in favour of this report because to me, it seems essential to clarify and standardise the many disparate food product labels and thus ensure they have a reliable scientific value. To this end, I supported the amendments to provide greater legibility, with, among other things, the obligation to respect a minimum font size; greater transparency in terms of the provenance of foods, allowing us to know where meat processed and sold in another country comes from; better information on the quality of foods released for consumption – for example, we must be in a position to know whether what we are eating has been prepared from deep-frozen or frozen ingredients; nutritional profiles containing information on the identity, composition, quantities, properties, durability and the storage and usage conditions of products released for consumption.

Finally, all of this regulation must not penalise small producers and micro-enterprises. Their artisanal products must be exempted. As for SMEs in the agricultural sector, they must be able to obtain specific aid.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** Today, we know that eating a poor diet or too much of certain nutrients (such as salt or fats) can lead to a great many diseases that not only represent serious public health problems but are also extremely costly to health services. In many cases, these diseases (such as hypertension) could be prevented with a more careful diet and the appropriate information.

I therefore think it is essential that food labelling be properly regulated. We cannot pass laws to force people to eat healthily, but we can give consumers the information they need to know exactly what they are consuming, so that they can then make a conscious choice. These are not measures against food producers – in fact, the proposal is so reasonable that it excludes traditional products and small and medium-sized catering businesses that serve non-prepacked meals. Instead, these are measures in favour of public health.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** I welcome the adoption of this report on the provision of food information to consumers, which combines and replaces seven directives and one regulation. The labelling of food products is crucial to guaranteeing food safety. I advocate clear information being given to the consumer, less bureaucracy, the simplification of regulations, greater legal certainty and increased competitiveness in the food industry, without forgetting small businesses. I welcome the fact that neither direct marketing by farmers nor local and traditional products will be subject to the rules of this regulation, as the Commission intended. It is products such as these that guarantee our roots and our cultural and gastronomic diversity. I am equally pleased with the fact that pre-packed products served in small hotel and catering establishments and cafés will not be covered by this regulation. The same situation exists with wines. Wines already have to display a series of mandatory particulars, so any additional information on the label would be too much and counterproductive as regards informing consumers. Consumers need to be informed,

but without being pressurised or directed in their choices. Consumers should have the freedom to make, and be responsible for, their own decisions.

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Consumers have a fundamental right to know as much as is possible and justifiable about the composition of foodstuffs. Such knowledge is also a necessary – though not sufficient – condition for them to make informed, conscious decisions about their diet and, as such, it helps promote people's health and welfare. We acknowledge and endorse the fact that the structure of the proposal applies essentially to prepacked foods. The specific characteristics of the catering sector, a large part of which consists of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, must be safeguarded, since the meals they prepare cannot be regarded as standardised products.

We regret, however, that many important amendments have been rejected, leaving the content of the report significantly poorer. We can only think that the majority in this Parliament has given in to the interests of certain powerful sectors of the food industry.

By way of an example, note the rejection of the amendment requiring consumers to be informed 'whenever the product intended for consumption is a GMO product and/or contains derivatives and substances that may be classified as GMOs'.

**Lorenzo Fontana (EFD)**, *in writing*. – (IT) The question of supplying food information to consumers, which forms the subject of Mrs Sommer's report, deserves particular attention.

Only by providing clear and exhaustive information on the provenance and content of products can we in fact protect consumers against the risk of making unwitting consumer choices with possible negative effects on their health. This matter is also linked to the quality product protection policy and a more general strategy of consumer defence, which has come up for discussion several times, both in plenary and within the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

I commend my colleague for the work she carried out on the Commission document and, in general, I support the amendments she proposes, in particular, her opposition to the introduction of the traffic light labelling system, which is simplistic and misleading. This system would have penalised some natural, high quality products over other products that had been artificially modified with the aim of obtaining a green light.

I believe that extending the obligation to indicate provenance to include raw ingredients in processed products is a significant result, although I would have preferred a vote against the product classification method derogations because they threaten to make the entire regulation ineffective.

**Robert Goebbels (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted against the report on the provision of so-called food information to consumers. 'Hell is paved with good intentions', as Jean-Paul Sartre observed. The 'good intentions' of the European Union relating to consumer information are indigestible and bureaucratic and go back to nannying consumers, the aim being to use the law to force them to live 'healthily' so that they will die in good health one day. The Commission still talks to us about better legislation, eliminating bureaucratic burdens on businesses and getting closer to citizens. Legislation that is as heavy and as convoluted as this regulatory proposal will not do the consumer any favours.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) This reform of consumer information has been botched and politicised. For the Commission, it is less about providing clear, useful and easily understood information and more about moralising through labelling. The rapporteur has tried, with limited success, to allow common sense amendments, such as the deletion of the famous nutritional profiles, which have no scientific basis, but stem from an ideological will to control what is on our plates, while making us feel guilty. It is true that, in this area, Brussels will certainly have fewer failures than in all the others that fall within its remit, like controlling financial speculation or illegal immigration, combating forgeries, and so on.

This is a sign of both impotence and tyranny: impotence in the face of the great political, economic and social problems, tyranny over defenceless individuals. These profiles have been kept. Let us hope that they will disappear at second reading. The only pleasant surprise is the obligation to indicate whether an animal was slaughtered without stunning, in other words, in accordance with a ritual, to stop us from selling it, without their knowledge, to consumers who do not share the religious convictions imposing such behaviour.

**Françoise Grossetête (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report on the provision of food information to consumers.

I am satisfied with this vote, which will allow consumers to have access in future to clear, legible and reliable labelling on certain food products. The idea of a colour code on packaging indicating whether the quantity of essential nutrients is high (green), medium (yellow) or low (red) – as sought by the socialists and the Greens – has been rejected thanks to the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), and I am pleased about that. The basis of a balanced diet is variety. This colour code would have resulted in the stigmatisation of certain foods, and I do not see how this would help our fellow citizens to have a more balanced diet.

We succeeded in avoiding a regulation which is too heavy, which would harm consumers as well as our SMEs. I am also happy that viticulture, the luxury sector *par excellence*, benefits from an exemption from nutritional labelling. We must not endanger our wine sector, which is already subject to a detailed regulatory system.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I declared myself in favour of clearer labelling on the nutritional values that will have to feature on the front of the packaging of all pre-packaged foods, in particular, supporting the introduction of a colour code allowing us to identify more easily the level of essential nutrients, and defended both by consumer associations and health professionals. The agri-food industry must stop hiding the reality of the damaging effect on nutritional balance that is clearly caused by some foods. I have also taken a stand for an amendment to supplement information on the origin of products by making their real provenance clear, in other words, the place where the food is obtained in its entirety. Finally, I also rejected the proposal to include alcohol in the framework of the regulation.

**Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) The European Parliament adopted the report on food labelling by a clear majority. This is good news for every one of us, because the packaging of food products will contain essential information which will enable us – the consumers – to make better-informed decisions about our diet. In so doing, the European Parliament declared itself in favour of making the information given to consumers legible, but not excessive. Parliament also acceded to the request for rejection of the colour coding of food using the 'traffic light' model, which is often confusing to consumers.

The European Parliament also decided that information about the energy value of the product should be given on the front of the package. A harmonised and simplified system of food labelling throughout the European Union will also contribute to greater cohesion of the internal market, meaning that producers will gain greater legal certainty while consumers obtain the information they want from food producers.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – There has been intense lobbying on this issue in recent weeks and months and it is to be regretted that in today's final vote, the lobbying of some of the larger players in the food industry has triumphed over consumer interests. Nevertheless, the final report does signal progress in some aspects of food labelling and, on balance, is to be welcomed as a step in the right direction.

**Holger Krahmer (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Providing consumers with information about food is undoubtedly important. However, the debate in Brussels has become a lobbying battle between large companies from the food industry and consumer protection organisations. There was no place in this debate for the reality of everyday life for consumers. The representatives of the German Free Democratic Party in the European Parliament are in favour of a minimum of labelling. Consumers should be able to make their purchasing decisions on the basis of transparent, legible information. Colour coded labelling influences consumers and does not form the basis for transparent information. The so-called guideline daily amounts (GDAs) also have their weak points. Instead of having neutral information about the amounts of nutrients per 100 grams or millilitres printed legibly on packaging, Parliament discussed whether the daily requirements of a 40-year-old woman could be used as the point of reference or whether the colour coding of nutrients was a useful decision-making tool.

The proposed, far-reaching, mandatory requirements for the origin labelling of ingredients cannot be implemented in practice. We also rejected the idea of special national provisions, because the labelling system should, as far as possible, be standardised. For these reasons, we were not able to vote in favour of the proposed report.

**Isabella Lövin and Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) We decided to vote in favour of the report, as the positives outweighed the negatives. Unfortunately, the opportunities for national regulations have been removed, but we believe that these will be reintroduced during negotiations with the Member States. Alcohol has been excluded from the proposal, and we lost the vote on the introduction of a traffic light labelling system, in other words, a system for labelling food red, amber or green based on how much of the different nutrients it contains. However, we did manage to get a number of positive amendments through:

labelling of nanomaterials in food has become mandatory, as has the country of origin labelling of meat, fish, dairy products, vegetables and fruit and the labelling of trans fats. Also, if the product contains glutamic acid, the text 'contains appetite-enhancing ingredients' must be stated in the ingredients declaration. Another victory is the fact that the content of energy, fat, saturated fats, sugar, salt and sweeteners must be stated on the front of the product. The meat glue that Parliament put a stop to earlier this spring has received a lot of attention. There are other products on the market that are used to stick pieces of meat together to create the impression that it is made from a single piece, for example, processed ham. These products now have to be labelled with the phrase 'with combined meat parts'. The improvements mean that consumers will be able to make more informed choices with regard to whether, for example, they want to choose healthier options or to reject products that have been transported long distances.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) As rapporteur for the opinion of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, I congratulate Mrs Sommer on her courage and good sense.

I voted for her proposals for the following reasons.

Non-prepacked foods must benefit from an exemption from obligatory nutritional labelling.

Alcoholic beverages do not have a place in this directive.

Imitation cheese must be clearly labelled.

I would say bravo for the new wording concerning the labelling of the origin of honey, because at the moment, large packaging companies put 'Blend of honeys from EU and non-EU countries' on their labels, even if this mixture contains only a tiny proportion of European honey, and if the rest is artificial honey or flavoured syrup of Chinese origin.

I firmly oppose national labelling systems, which hinder the internal market. Furthermore, I fear that these national systems may open a loophole and allow the famous 'traffic lights' to enter by the back door.

Voluntary additional information should be justified scientifically so that consumers are not misled. Nutritional profiles are a concept which is neither scientifically defensible nor a means of information, because the thresholds proposed by the European Commission and challenged by the European Food Safety Authority are not justified and are completely unpredictable. This would be to misinform the consumer.

**Gesine Meissner (ALDE), in writing.** – (DE) Providing consumers with information about food is undoubtedly important. However, the debate in Brussels has become a lobbying battle between large companies from the food industry and consumer protection organisations. There was no place in this debate for the reality of everyday life for consumers. The representatives of the German Free Democratic Party in the European Parliament are in favour of a minimum of labelling. Consumers should be able to make their purchasing decisions on the basis of transparent, legible information. Colour coded labelling influences consumers and does not form the basis for transparent information. The so-called guideline daily amounts (GDAs) also have their weak points. Instead of having neutral information about the amounts of nutrients per 100 grams or millilitres printed legibly on packaging, Parliament discussed whether the daily requirements of a 40-year-old woman could be used as the point of reference or whether the colour coding of nutrients was a useful decision-making tool. The proposed, far-reaching, mandatory requirements for the origin labelling of ingredients cannot be implemented in practice. We have also rejected the idea of special national provisions, because the labelling system should, as far as possible, be standardised. For these reasons, we were not able to vote in favour of the proposed report.

**Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The aim of labelling food products is to ensure that consumers have complete information made available to them on the contents and composition of these products, so as to protect their health and their interests. For this reason, we are of the opinion that the labelling of food products is fundamental to having greater market transparency, insofar as it allows producers to inform consumers in a regulated and credible manner about the quality and/or specific regional origin of their products. We also welcome the fact that foods produced in a traditional or handcrafted manner and wines are worthy of special treatment, taking into account their particularities.

**Judith A. Merckies (S&D), in writing.** – (NL) A healthy diet is important. Yet how does one make choices in this regard? Reliable, comprehensible information on the packaging plays a major role. This new legislation will provide consumers with better, more comprehensible information, the most important of which is to be readily visible on the front of the packaging, with a fuller description on the back. This enables consumers

to compare products at a glance, and opt for a healthier product if they wish. A system of colour coding, involving indicating on the front of the packaging whether the food has a high or low salt or fat content, was voted down by Parliament. I voted in favour of that system, as it provided consumers with clarity without being overly didactic. The original traffic light system, which used the colours red and green to indicate whether the product was healthy or unhealthy, was not put to the vote, as it had already been rejected at an earlier stage. I found that system too simplistic and somewhat didactic. One missed opportunity with these new rules besides the rejection of the colour coding system was the exemption of alcoholic beverages. It is a shame that Parliament did not vote in favour of clear labelling of alcoholic beverages with information such as the kilocalorie count and the content of sugar and other additives. These new rules offer consumers the opportunity for a healthier diet if they so desire.

**Claudio Morganti (EFD)**, *in writing*. – (IT) My position on the report under discussion by Parliament is motivated, among other things, by the proposal to introduce a multi-coloured labelling system. The quality of food products depends on a multitude of complex factors that cannot be appropriately represented by different coloured labels. Authoritative studies carried out on the subject have, in fact, shown that no numerical thresholds can allow foods to be accurately sorted into the different colour categories proposed. The adoption of a multicoloured labelling system would therefore unduly influence the perception of consumers, who should instead be able to make decisions on the basis of transparent information.

**Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The compulsory inclusion of the country of origin on the label will support European producers because it will offer recognition for the high standards of quality which they apply. Our citizens want to know where the products they buy come from, whether they are European or imported. At the same time, consumers in other markets have confidence in what is produced and processed in the European Union.

In fact, compulsory inclusion of the country of origin on the label will serve a dual purpose: informing consumers and promoting European food products on global markets. I welcome the rejection of the amendment on colour coding because it would have had the opposite effect. It could have turned consumers away from traditional, healthy and natural European products due to the simplistic nature of the evaluation method proposed.

**Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PL) Acting in the interests of the European Union's consumers, I endorsed the report on a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers. One of the fundamental rights of EU citizens is the right to information, including in connection with food products. Freedom of choice will not be complete if it is not also an informed choice. The report is an important step towards making consumers more aware by establishing a uniform labelling system which shows the nutritional values, ingredients and place of origin of products. With the concurrent introduction of complementary information programmes, we can achieve the goal of having consumers make appropriate decisions on food choices.

**Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the adoption of this report, which generally responds in a balanced manner to the initial proposal of the European Commission, in that it calls for the exemption of non-prepacked products and regional products from the regulation's scope; exemption from mandatory labelling for wines and wine products; rejection of the 'traffic light' system (red, yellow or green to illustrate the levels of carbohydrates, proteins and fats); and the mandatory indication of the place of origin for meat, albeit subject to the results of an impact analysis to be carried out by the European Commission. The derogations from the generally applicable system that are allowed for regional products, wine and, to a certain extent, meat, are positive. Indeed, the European Commission's initial proposal would be quite prejudicial to Portugal, which is recognised for its historical gastronomic traditions: it would face additional problems of competitiveness in relation to northern Member States of the EU, with their highly industrialised food production and infrequent use of traditional techniques and/or instruments. Added to this is the very positive fact that this report stipulates that direct marketing by farmers will not be subject to the rules of the general regulation.

**Rovana Plumb (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) This regulation must provide a labelling system which is valid for the whole EU and can be applied – with few exceptions – to all food products, and therefore not just to certain categories of products. Harmonisation of the labelling system is also particularly relevant to the smooth operation of the internal market as, at present, the additional national regulations and the various interpretations Member States apply to existing European legislation on labelling create barriers to trade and problems relating to competition. Resolving these problems may help lower prices for food producers and retailers and, by extension, for consumers as well.



According to a survey carried out in Romania involving a sample of 1 000 people aged between 18 and 50, Romanians are most worried about product safety (75%), misleading conditions (67%) and credit/loan services (51%), while they are least worried about tourist services (28%). For this reason, food labelling is only one of many aspects relating to food. This form of information can supplement, but not replace the attempts to raise the population's awareness through education campaigns and measures promoting a fairly healthy lifestyle.

**Britta Reimers (ALDE), in writing.** – (DE) Mandatory origin labelling of meat, poultry, dairy products, fresh fruit and vegetables and processed products made from one ingredient, which is called for in the report on the provision of food information to consumers, puts an unreasonable burden on food processing companies. For this reason, I have voted against the report. Food is produced across national borders within the European internal market. For example, in the dairy industry, milk from different countries is collected and processed. Separate labelling of the batches that are being processed from different countries is technically impossible. This will place bureaucratic obstacles in the path of European companies which are successful on the global market.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – Today's vote on the report on food information to consumers has been a long, exhausting and, to a certain degree too, frustrating vote: The report has been adopted by 562 votes in favour to 67 against, and we have voted in favour because, after all, we have won more than we lost. For instance, we won on aspects such as: nano-labelling; mandatory country of origin labelling for meat, poultry, dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables, other single-ingredient products and for meat, poultry, fish in processed foods; for meat, three places if appropriate (birth, rearing, slaughter); mandatory labelling of trans fats and hydrogenated oils; front of pack: energy, sugar, salt, fats and saturates; sweetener front of pack; labelling of meat made of combined meat parts ('meat glue'); specification of oil origin (so that you can e.g. avoid palm oil); 'fresh milk' can only be labelled as 'fresh' when its use-by-date is more than seven days after the filling date; 'appetite-enhancing ingredients' must be labelled as such (glutamates); labelling of 'imitation food'; no deletion of nutrient profiles. But, we lost traffic lights! Also, on national schemes, voluntary and mandatory are not possible; this was a big loss, although we are confident the Council will fix that.

**Olga Sehnalová (S&D), in writing.** – (CS) In my opinion, the ever increasing requirements for food labelling will not do much to change eating habits in comparison with the cost of implementing these measures. Neither will it eliminate the main problem, which is the incidence of obesity and obesity-related diseases in the population at large, directly resulting from the imbalance between energy input and output, in connection with the lack of physical exercise. My grandmother used to say: 'Eat until half full, drink until half drunk, and you will live many years.' I apologise for the simplification, but it does express my views on this proposal. I have abstained from the vote.

**Catherine Soullie (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) I am very pleased with the result of the vote on the Sommer report. The European Parliament has opted for a legible and informative labelling system that will favour balanced consumption patterns. Furthermore, I welcome the adoption of Amendment 205, which will allow for the inclusion of mandatory particulars for meat and meat products derived from animals that have not been stunned prior to slaughter. The consumer needs to be informed of respect for animal welfare practices, practices that are at the heart of European food policy. This is not about stigmatising religious communities or putting their meat production and distribution chain in difficulty, but simply about letting European citizens consume with full knowledge of the facts.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing.** – (NL) A couple of minor points notwithstanding, the revision of the legislation on food labelling is a step in the right direction. The regulation will mean that consumers are better informed about foods in future. I think it regrettable that, owing to pressure from the industrial lobby, the amendment on the traffic light system did not make it. Colour coding in red, amber or green would give consumers a simple, clear idea of how healthy or otherwise a product's contents are.

The strong points of the new legislation include the need for food manufacturers to display a product's energy, salt, sugar, fat and saturated fat content. The origin of meat, fish and dairy products must now be displayed on the packaging. Consumers can now ascertain themselves where the animals were born, reared and slaughtered. They can opt for local and regional products and avoid unnecessary food miles. Milk with a shelf life in excess of seven days is no longer to be labelled as fresh milk.

The issue of trans fats and flavour enhancers has been tackled. If a product has been sweetened, this must be stated on the packaging. All these decisions represent progress for consumers, who will now be well informed and be able to make considered choices.

**Catherine Stihler (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I welcome this report which will make traffic light labelling of food mandatory. This is the system most preferred by consumers and will allow them to take control of their diet. I also welcome the protected status for the labelling of Scotch whisky from Scotland.

**Marc Tarabella (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) At the moment, the contents of our shopping trolleys are lying by omission: where does the beef used in lasagne come from? Where do the tomatoes in soup come from? The consumer does not know. This absence of information prevents him from making an informed choice, in particular as regards the food's carbon footprint. That is why I can only welcome the fact that the European Parliament has followed my position by imposing the mandatory indication of the country of origin for, among other things, single ingredient products, and meat, poultry and fish used as ingredients in processed foods. This is another step in the right direction to give our consumers reliable and high-quality information.

**Nuno Teixeira (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) More uniform food labelling throughout the European Union is needed to ensure greater transparency through simplified information for consumers, more legal certainty for food enterprises and greater clarity in the *acquis communautaire*. In my view, the Commission went too far in its proposal by trying to educate consumers in their preferences.

The information on the labels must be confined to what is essential. I therefore supported the rapporteur's amendments rejecting the traffic light system to illustrate the levels of carbohydrates, protein and fat, and her proposals to include information on energy values and nutritional values prominently on the packaging. I believe, however, that this EU legislation must exclude local and handcrafted products, as well as produce that farmers market directly. Regional products ensure the continuity of local specialities and the diversity of the products available. The regulation should not apply to these products because of their special nature and the fact that they themselves ensure European diversity. I also hope that the regulation adopted today does not damage the small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector and that the five-year transition period provided for in the adopted document will allow them to adapt more effectively.

**Alexandra Thein (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Along with the majority of Members in the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I have decided to vote in favour of the Sommer report. It is true that the Liberals were not able to achieve their goals in every area. The adoption of origin labelling for meat and milk in processed products is a regrettable move, because it imposes significant costs on producers and seems almost impossible to implement in practice. However, for me, the positive results of the vote outweigh the negative ones. For the first time, we have uniform regulations on food labelling throughout the entire internal market, with no possibility of individual countries going it alone. In addition, one of the decisive successes of this vote for me is the fact that the misleading traffic light model was rejected. A mandatory colour coded nutrient declaration will not be permitted either at a European or a national level. Uniform Europe-wide labelling rules will bring clear advantages for companies and consumers. The cost of manufacturing and selling products will fall because manufacturers will only have to follow a single regulation. Consumers will benefit from uniform nutrient labelling when comparing products that come from within Europe.

**Peter van Dalen (ECR)**, *in writing*. – (NL) The crucial point here is that consumers are entitled to know what is in their food. They must be able to make an informed choice on the basis of clear information. Clarity for the consumer and feasibility for industry must take centre stage. Yet more is not always better where information is concerned. Take, for example, country of origin labelling for products. This national approach is pure protectionism and thus harmful to European and Dutch exporting companies, in particular. It sends out the wrong signal; an outmoded signal, even. Country of origin labelling actually provides little information to consumers while generating high costs for manufacturers. Therefore, I think it a shame that this House opted for that part.

**Derek Vaughan (S&D)**, *in writing*. – This report will mean that energy, fat, saturates, sugar and salt levels will have to be clearly displayed on the front of all pre-packed foods. It sends a clear message to consumers about the importance of healthy eating and making the right choices. Unfortunately, a socialist amendment that would have introduced a clear 'traffic light' system, making the choice clearer for consumers, was defeated. This report also extended the rules on country of origin labelling to all meat, poultry and dairy products, which should put an end to products produced with imported ingredients being misleadingly labelled as, for example, British – a move that should be welcomed by both farmers and consumers across the EU.

**Angelika Werthmann (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) Ladies and gentlemen, consumers have a right to know what substances different foods contain. For this reason, information about the composition and nutritional value of foods is essential, as it will allow consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. For people who

suffer from allergies, for example, specific, clear, detailed and comparable information in easily understandable language is crucial. Finally, I believe it is important for consumers to be able to take responsibility for their own decisions, but this is only possible on the basis of transparent information. Thank you.

**Glenis Willmott (S&D)**, *in writing*. – As S&D rapporteur, I recommended my group to support the amended report and legislative resolution amending the Commission proposal on food information to consumers. We voted against the deletion of the possibility for voluntary, non-binding national schemes to continue, which my group and I are firmly opposed to. This deletion was nonetheless approved by the plenary. Nevertheless, we had many positive outcomes on other aspects, including mandatory country of origin labelling and ensuring that key ingredients are labelled on front of pack and a full nutrition declaration is placed on the back of the pack, which is a definite improvement on the Commission proposal. I now call on Member States in the Council to reinsert national schemes and introduce colour coding so that consumers have access to clear, up-front and honest food information.

**Anna Záborská (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (SK) Legislation in the area of food should be based on facts, not impressions. The information on the packaging should be precise, legible and comprehensible. The nutrition profile is quite the opposite. It is not fact, it is impression. At the same time, it is a way of telling people what they should and should not eat. This unnecessary and sometimes misleading information has no place on food packaging. The failure to adopt the proposal to end mandatory provision of nutrition profile information is evidence of the etatism which still exercises a strong hold over politicians and civil servants. I firmly believe that this way of thinking is a real cause of the economic crisis in Europe.

#### **Motion for a resolution on EU 2020 (B7-0348/2010)**

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) Supported by the five largest political groups in the European Parliament, this joint resolution calls on Member States to go further in their commitments vis-à-vis this long-term European Union economic strategy. After the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010), which we will remember for its lack of concrete results, the EU 2020 strategy must not disappoint. The Member States will therefore finally have to carry out reforms and adopt the measures necessary for the success of the objectives put forward. Personally speaking, I am delighted that my colleagues have supported my call for further simplification of the procedures regarding the Structural Funds and have included the following sentence that I drafted in the resolution: ‘urges, therefore, that the rules for implementing cohesion policy should be further simplified in the interests of user friendliness, accountability and a more responsive approach to future challenges and to the risk of economic crises’.

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I voted for this resolution though I have doubts about the feasibility of proposed targets. The 2020 strategy sets out very ambitious goals to be achieved during the coming decade, such as a high quality employment and more green jobs, climate and energy targets and many others. However, I believe that the strategy is missing crucial elements such as setting out concrete measures and actions which must be taken in order to respond to the challenges. The strategy proposed by the Commission is of a rather general nature and the Commission should present without delay more detailed plans to clarify how the proposed initiatives will be implemented. Otherwise, the strategy risks to be merely a collection of slogans without a concrete backup and repeat the failure of the Lisbon Strategy.

**Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) Naturally I am in favour of the objectives of the 2020 strategy, in particular, in the areas of employment, research, development, innovation, the fight against climate change, poverty reduction and improvements in the level of training. However, I fear that due to binding commitments made and respected by the Member States, these objectives will not be achieved. Indeed, if, despite the calls repeated by the European Parliament, we go no further than the open method of coordination, the same causes will produce the same effects. What did not work for the Lisbon Strategy in the last decade will not work for the Europe 2020 strategy either. We need more community method. We need direct operational measures. That is the price we have to pay for the success of the EU 2020 strategy.

**Livia Járóka (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome the European Parliament's new resolution on the Europe 2020 strategy, in which it calls upon the European Council to draw up a forward-looking and consistent strategy for achieving the goals of the initiative, as well as to seek Parliament's opinion when determining key parameters. National parliaments, local governments and the relevant non-governmental organisations should also be involved in this consultation. In the course of meeting the targets concerning the labour market and combating poverty defined in the second half of the European Commission's integrated guidelines on the subject, significant emphasis should be placed on social inclusion of the largest and poorest minority on this continent, the Roma. On the one hand, the proportion of Roma

among the segment of the active population supporting the social security system is growing steadily, and on the other, the integration into the labour market of such an enormous population of unemployed people entails great economic potential.

The strategy must produce a detailed and sustainable road map for the integrated guidelines, particularly with regard to raising the employment rate among the working age population to 75%, reducing the number of those living below the national poverty threshold by 25% and reducing school drop-out rates to below 10% of the age cohort. Additionally, in accordance with Parliament's resolution, we must set a 100% target for completion of secondary education. It is regrettable, however, that the headline targets of the strategy do not include gender equality, even though this is a fundamental pillar of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency's programme.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The adoption of the new EU 2020 strategy must take into account the ever greater effects of the economic and financial crisis affecting the whole EU. With this in mind, an ambitious and coherent strategy must be adopted which is directed towards the future. In this new EU 2020 strategy, it is essential for people and protection of the environment to be at the heart of governance. The Member States have to be concerned with reducing their public spending by means of major structural reforms. Efforts must be concentrated on the citizens, through reinforcement of their participation and their autonomy, while encouraging their spirit of enterprise and innovation, as well as on small and medium-sized enterprises, making legislation work more in their favour. A strategy must be implemented that is aimed at accelerating sustainable economic growth, together with reforms aimed at re-launching and improving competitiveness.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (ES) I voted against Resolution RC7-0348/2010 on the European Union 2020 strategy because I believe that this strategy is but a mere continuation of the Lisbon Strategy, the failure of which is demonstrated by the current crisis. It is clear that the Lisbon Strategy has been a fiasco, as evidenced by the current levels of unemployment, not seen in Europe since the thirties. The EU 2020 strategy is a continuation of this and does not imply any change. The objectives of poverty reduction are quite modest, but will not even be achieved as it contains no effective tool to achieve them. In this sense, it is meaningless. The culprit for the failure of this model is not only the market, or the governments, but the main groups in this Chamber who reached an agreement here to transform the Washington Consensus into the Brussels Consensus. The underlying problem is non-intervention in the economy, which prevents European integration and makes the existence and cohesion of a European social model impossible. The deregulated market is threatening democracy itself, which is why I wanted to show my rejection of this policy with my vote.

**Aldo Patriciello (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) I listened with interest to the statements by Commission President Barroso and President Van Rompuy.

Although I am pleased to see the improvements in European economic governance toward a common approach, I honestly believe that the results of the summit are merely declarations of intent. At this particular historical juncture, the best thing would, in fact, be to create a more solid common basis to tackle the balance deficits of individual Member States and restore faith in financial markets and the trust of our citizens.

I certainly agree with the target set by the EU 2020 strategy, which is to strengthen the competitiveness of the 27 Member States. If we wish to win the challenge of future economic leadership, it will be essential to have rules that are clear and feasible for all. We must avoid committing errors similar to those committed by the Lisbon Strategy, with consequences for citizens, jobs and economic growth.

**Regina Bastos (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on EU 2020. Given the severity of the financial, economic and social crisis that we are experiencing, EU 2020, which is to be adopted by the Council this week, should be equipped with instruments and targets to meet the challenge. We are currently witnessing an unprecedented weakening of Member States' ability to respond. We must therefore identify common causes and allies, and act in a clear and united manner on the European and world stage. If we do not adopt the measures of collective discipline and accountability that are required, Europe will be consigned to marginalisation and impoverishment.

Only a strong Europe that respects its shared rules will be able to give an adequate response to the new era. For this strategy to be correctly implemented and carried out, clear, quantifiable targets must be set for the areas of employment and especially education and poverty reduction. It is also crucial to do everything possible to help Member States transpose their national targets and ensure that EU 2020 is properly implemented. Lastly, I must stress how important it is that Parliament be fully involved and included in the implementation of this new strategy, in conjunction with the Commission and the Council.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL)** I voted against the joint motion for a resolution on economic governance, because it moves towards even stricter treaties and even stricter discipline in the unacceptable and unsuccessful Stability Pact. In the name of financial discipline and competitiveness, it promotes, with the cooperation of the IMF, the application, in almost all of Europe, of harsh austerity programmes which take income and rights away from the workers and condemn the economies of its Member States to recession. The motion does not overturn the structural and institutional problems of EMU and does not make provision for Community solidarity mechanisms. It serves the sovereignty of the financial system and does not address speculative games, leading the economies of the EU into onerous speculative borrowing. Finally, it moves the European Union away from the objective of economic and social convergence and cohesion.

**Anne Delvaux (PPE), in writing. – (FR)** Diversity is what gives Europe its charm, but it is a permanent weakness, in particular, when we need to take socio-economic decisions. The slow response of European leaders is regrettable. As early as 1989, the Member States rejected the report by Jacques Delors aiming to establish an economic policy coordination pact alongside the Stability and Growth Pact. As Mr Delors says, it is this 'structural fault' that we are currently paying for. Now it is important to preserve what we have and, above all, the euro, which is the most spectacular element of European integration and the most easily understood by all. We need to move towards a true European budgetary federation.

Nonetheless, in order to extend the financial control mechanisms at institutional and political level, we will need a European consensus that has already been reached in the Chamber with the vote on this resolution. We need to reform the regulatory framework entirely, demand common management of the economy and make the financial sector cover the costs of its performance. Finally, we can be delighted with the new European financial stabilisation mechanism to assist countries that are facing financial difficulties.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** In this current phase, EU 2020 must focus on real, concrete measures that the Member States can achieve, so as to produce the intended results. Innovation, research and development, and investment in worker training are essential to making Europe more competitive in a globalised world. This approach will enable us to tackle the current crisis by reducing unemployment levels and encouraging investment.

A firmer cohesion policy is also important for reducing the differences between regions, thus putting the Union's principle of solidarity into practice. I strongly support the various flagship initiatives and believe that they will lead to an improvement in living conditions within the Union and greater competitiveness with regard to countries outside the Union.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT)** We voted against the joint motion for a resolution on EU 2020 because, although it makes some criticisms of the proposal submitted by the Commission, it does not get to the root of the problem and it does not propose a break with the neoliberal policies that remain the major guideline for the Commission's proposals.

In this severe crisis of capitalism, which is making workers and ordinary people suffer the major consequences of worsening unemployment, growing inequalities and poverty, what was needed was a break with the policies underlying it.

That means an immediate end to the Stability and Growth Pact and its stupid criteria, which only serve as an excuse to facilitate the increasing exploitation of those who work, as is happening in Portugal.

What was also needed was an end to liberalisation, not least in the financial and energy sectors, so as to ensure greater state control and prevent them from continuing their policy of increasing profits at the expense of higher prices for consumers and customers and a reduction in the value placed on workers.

**Andreas Mølzer (NI), in writing. – (DE)** I have voted against the joint motion for a resolution on economic policy coordination, because it draws the wrong conclusions from the current crisis. The crisis concerning the common currency is not the result of too few centralist rules. It has been caused by lumping together national economies which are completely different in terms of performance. It is simply not possible to have the same economic policy in Germany and Greece or Spain. However, this is exactly what the planned measures for economic policy coordination aim to achieve.

This will finally transform the EU into a transfer union. In other words, the economic performance of the strong national economies will be transferred to the weaker ones, but without resolving their structural problems. I object to this, because it will ultimately lead to the relatively healthy economies being ruined

and, as a result, they will no longer be competitive on the global market. This will also destroy the European unification project, which surely cannot be what we want to achieve.

**Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), in writing. – (EL)** The joint motion for a resolution on the EU 2020 strategy is intended to replace the admittedly unsuccessful Lisbon Strategy. Employment rates in Europe average 69% among people aged 20-64 and are still considerably lower than in other parts of the world. Young people have been hard hit by the crisis, with an unemployment rate in excess of 21%. Demographic ageing is accelerating. Investment in the innovation market is seriously overdue. The new strategy calls for these trends to be reversed in a particularly difficult economic environment. What sets the report apart is its insistence on the importance of research and innovation as a vehicle for economic recovery and growth in national economies. The European Parliament is calling on the Commission to increase its budget in this specific sector even more and it is important for Greece that we stress this specific point. Low productivity is directly linked to the lack of new and innovative ideas. The new strategy is a first-class chance for our country to use Community resources to produce new, innovative ideas which will make a positive contribution towards invigorating competitiveness and encouraging the creation of new jobs.

**Markus Pieper (PPE), in writing. – (DE)** Mr President, I have abstained from voting on the resolution on the Europe 2020 strategy. Of course, I believe that reform of the EU institutions, improved coordination and a new focus on demographic issues and innovation strategies are necessary. However, I was disappointed by Parliament's non-committal approach to the financial markets and the stability pact. Without the debt rescheduling option that we have called for, the EU rescue package will definitely result in the creation of a transfer union. This is a no-go area for responsible politicians in the Member States. In addition, I think that the refusal of a majority of this House to grant the Commission more powers of inspection and more powers to impose sanctions signals a return to a national egoistic approach. This will not be a glorious chapter in the history of the European Parliament. It is as if we are saying that Europe will pay for our mistakes, but no one can take away our right to keep making the same mistakes over and over again. Therefore, I would like to call for automatic sanction mechanisms as a punishment for financial wrongdoing. We also need the possibility of an organised withdrawal from the rescue fund with the debt rescheduling option. We must start preparing these measures now, because if we are called on to put them in place without preparation, the costs will be two or three times as high. Thank you very much.

**Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing. – (RO)** I voted for the European Parliament Resolution on the EU 2020 strategy because I thought that this strategy needs to be ambitious in the long term with regard to increasing the employment rate and cutting poverty by 50% in the EU. The majority of Europeans currently living in poverty or at the risk of doing so are women, especially elderly women, single mothers and single women who have dependants to care for.

High-quality jobs must be a key priority of the EU 2020 strategy. Attaching greater importance to ensuring that labour markets operate properly and to social conditions is essential in terms of improving employment performance. We must promote decent work, protect the rights of workers throughout the whole of Europe and improve working conditions.

Consequently, Member States must adopt measures aimed at greater involvement in an open labour market which will help reduce the level of undeclared work and ensure the full participation of women in the labour market, promoting professional opportunities for women and the need for better conditions to help them balance their professional and family lives.

**Catherine Stihler (S&D), in writing. –** Tomorrow, hopefully, we will see the formal process to allow Iceland in to the EU, which should be our priority. I would like to see a Joint Parliamentary Committee between the European Parliament and the Althingi formally established.

**Theodor Dumitru Stolojan (PPE), in writing. –** The current financial and economic crisis has demonstrated that a change in European governance is inevitable. The task force on European governance should focus on strengthening the economic policy coordination of the 27 Member States. Even if the Stability and Growth Pact has been broken by many Member States, this instrument of public finance discipline should be revitalised and the sanctions should be reinforced for the Member States that do not implement measures to consolidate their public budgets and to keep deficits under control. The task force should also concentrate on damaging fiscal competition among the Member States.

#### **Motion for a resolution (B7-0349/2010)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), in writing. – (PT)** I voted in favour of the resolution for the following reasons:

- I consider the agreement on the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism to guarantee the stability of the euro to be an important first step towards giving the European Union a more robust and sustainable economic and monetary policy framework, but deplore the fact that the European policy makers did not take decisive action earlier, despite the deepening financial crisis;

- I am of the opinion that recent events show that the euro area is in need of bolder economic governance and that a monetary pillar without a social and economic pillar is doomed to failure;

- I agree that in order to restore sound growth rates and achieve the objective of sustainable economic development and social cohesion, priority should be given to dealing with persistent and significant macro-economic imbalances and disparities in competitiveness. I welcome the recognition of this need by the Commission in its communication on economic policy coordination.

**Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) Europe is clearly suffering from a lack of economic governance. Although monetary policy is united around the euro, unfortunately, each Member State continues to conduct its own economic policy, quite often without taking into account its neighbour's reforms, or sometimes even 'falsifying' its public accounts. This was the source of the Greek crisis and could well cause other crises in the future if we are not careful. I therefore approve 100% the wording of paragraph 15 of this resolution on economic governance. It is indeed true to say that 'the Member States should not consider their respective economic policies as a matter of purely national interest, but also as a matter of common interest, and should formulate their policies accordingly'. Moreover, to me, the measures proposed really seem to be going in the right direction: the strengthening of Eurostat's powers, the creation of a European Monetary Fund, the issuing of eurobonds, the adoption of binding measures concerning the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy, taking better account of the European Parliament in the area of economic policy, and so on. For all of these reasons, I voted for this resolution.

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing.** – I voted for the resolution and I fully endorse the line it takes. The European Union needs to reform its system of economic governance and to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances which is essential for stability and growth. The proposed European Financial Stabilisation mechanism will only be effective if proper structural reforms are implemented. I believe that Europe should establish its own rating agency and the lending fund which could be used to provide financial aid for all Members States in need, and not to eurozone countries only. Moreover, effective economic governance calls for a stronger Commission which, under the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, has been given the task of coordinating reform plans and measures and establishing a common strategy.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution as I believe that strengthening economic governance must go hand in hand with reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of European governance, which must be achieved through the closer and more timely involvement of the European Parliament and of national parliaments throughout the process. I agree that, if the Europe 2020 strategy is to be credible, greater compatibility and complementarity is needed between the national budgets of the 27 Member States and the EU budget, and support the idea that the EU budget should perform a more important role by pooling resources. I also agree with the importance of the requirement that the EU budget should reflect the need to fund the transition towards an environmentally sustainable economy.

**Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing.** – I support this resolution which highlights the need for strong economic governance in the face of the financial and economic crisis. The current crisis has made it clear that we need a common social and economic strategy and the means to tackle the macro-economic imbalances which have exacerbated our problems, but the EU's conservative governments remain fixated on choking growth, slashing and privatising public services and cutting welfare, while jealously guarding national economic governance prerogatives that need to be pooled to survive the crisis. We need to deal with the deficits, but we will fail to weather this crisis if every country slashes public spending and forces the citizens to bear the unsustainable burden of saving a financial sector that brought our economies to the brink of disaster and is now gambling against their survival. The EU governments must push for a global financial transaction tax at the G20 summit in Toronto, and set the example by implementing it at EU level. The same goes for strict regulation of hedge funds and private equity. We must set up a European Monetary Fund that enables EU governments to raise funds to restructure their economies without harmful conditions.

**Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing.** – (FR) In order to get out of the financial crisis, Europe needs an ambitious large-scale reform of its economic governance. The European Parliament stresses the need to rely, on the one hand, on more use of the Community method rather than the strengthening of intergovernmentalism and, on the other, on operational measures instead of simple open coordination and

peer monitoring, a method that has led to the failure of the Lisbon Strategy. The strategy recommended by a large parliamentary majority rests on five pillars: a more proactive Stability and Growth Pact; real economic governance led by the Commission; an acceleration of the transition towards a sustainable economy, based on the Monti report and on a European programme for investment in the infrastructures of central and southern Europe; new permanent instruments – the European Monetary Fund and the European corporate bond market – in order to be better prepared for future crises; a better calibrated EU 2020 strategy, with sanctions and incentives for its proper implementation.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing.* – (PT) Economic governance is especially important these days when many Member States find themselves in particularly difficult circumstances due to their high deficits and debts, and when exceptional, stringent economic decisions have been made, often with disastrous consequences for their citizens. Accordingly, the whole framework of economic governance and the whole implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact and national programmes have to be re-examined. More effective measures need to be adopted.

It is essential for both the European Union and the national governments to make the most of the current situation to restructure their existing economic governance mechanisms and national public finances, with a view to achieving long-term sustainability and real growth in the European economy. For the rest, I believe coordination between the Member States and the Union institutions is essential to produce faster and more effective solutions to the national problems that affect the whole Union, especially the euro area.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing.* – (PT) I support greater political integration in the EU and coordinated and strengthened economic governance. Europe needs real solidarity. This solidarity implies that all the Member States are responsible for not harming the others through bad governance or incompetence or concealing data in public accounts. The European Financial Stabilisation Fund to guarantee the stability of the euro is an important first step towards giving the European Union a more robust and sustainable economic and monetary policy framework. It is a pity that this mechanism has taken so long to come. I support having an oversight mechanism for the public accounts and deficits of each Member State to ensure that the reported sanctions will not be applied. I am also of the opinion that there should be a 'European Monetary Fund' (EMF) to which euro area countries would contribute in a manner proportionate to the size of their GDP. The sustainability of public finances is essential for the stability and growth of the euro area. However, it is important to restore growth rates and achieve the objective of sustainable economic development and social cohesion, giving priority to dealing with persistent and significant macro-economic imbalances and disparities in competitiveness.

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing.* – (FR) The current crisis is a direct consequence of the liberal policies advocated by the European Union. The Stability and Growth Pact is directly responsible for the current suffering of people in the euro area. Wishing to carry it through more rigorously is an aberration. Demanding that the Commission should have more powers in this area is another. It is the people who produce the riches that the reigning Eurocracy share. It is high time that the people took back power in Europe, because it is not the Barroso Commission, or the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, the signatories of this resolution, that will construct the Europe of solidarity that we need.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing.* – (PT) The current financial and economic crisis has shown that the EU needs increasingly strong economic and monetary governance, so that the stability of the euro, and of monetary union itself, is not jeopardised. The EU 2020 strategy should therefore aim to promote economic growth and create jobs, as the accentuated fall in GDP, the drop in industrial production and high unemployment figures constitute an important social and economic challenge, which only strong governance, working in harmony and solidarity, can overcome.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing.* – (ES) I voted against the joint resolution on economic governance because I believe that the current economic model has failed. The culprit for this failure is not only the market, or the governments, but the main groups in this Chamber who reached an agreement to transform the Washington Consensus into the Brussels Consensus. The underlying problem is non-intervention in the economy, which prevents European integration and makes the existence and cohesion of a European social model impossible. The deregulated market is threatening democracy itself. The members of my parliamentary group, the GUE/NGL, support the response of workers to the crisis, with general strikes in Greece, Portugal and soon in Spain. The unions have already announced that there will be a general strike in Spain on



29 September, coinciding with the great mobilisation organised by the European Trade Union Confederation. This is the response of workers to this model.

**Paulo Rangel (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution since I am of the opinion that strengthening economic governance must go hand in hand with reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of European governance, which must be achieved through the closer and more timely involvement of the European Parliament and of national parliaments throughout the process.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – Although not perfect, we have supported the joint resolution. Hot debates have taken place regarding paragraph 12, which remains in its entirety even if we tried to eliminate the second part where it tries to limit deficit and debt via fines.

#### **Motion for a resolution B7-0348/2010, B7-0349/2010**

**Nessa Childers (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I regret to vote against these motions as I support them for the most part. The reason, however, that I cannot support this vote is that it is the policy of the Irish Labour Party, of which I am a member, not to support a common consolidated corporate tax base.

#### **Proposal for a decision on setting up a special committee on the policy challenges and budgetary resources for a sustainable European Union after 2013, its powers, numerical composition and term of office (B7-0295/2010)**

**Sophie Auconie (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) In one year's time, in July 2011, the European Commission will present a calculation for the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020. It is essential for the European Parliament to reflect in advance on the challenges to come and to draw up its budgetary priorities. I therefore voted in favour of creating this special parliamentary committee whose work will last one year and whose mission will be: a) to define Parliament's political priorities for the post-2013 MFF, both in legislative terms and budgetary terms; b) to estimate the financial resources necessary for the Union to attain its objectives and carry out its policies for the period starting 1 January 2014; c) to define the duration of the next MFF; d) to propose a structure for the future MFF, indicating the main areas of Union activity; e) to submit guidelines for an indicative allocation of resources between the different headings of expenditure of the MFF; f) to specify the link between a reform of the financing system of the EU budget and a review of expenditure. Finally I would like to warmly thank my colleagues for choosing me to sit in this committee as a substitute member, alongside Michel Dantin, Alain Lamassoure and Damien Abad.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution since I am of the opinion that it is fundamentally important to set up a committee to begin to discuss the post-2013 financial framework, particularly, to calculate the financial resources necessary for the Union to attain its objectives and carry out its policies for the period beginning 1 January 2014, to define the duration of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and to propose, in accordance with the goals and priorities set, a structure for the future MFF, indicating the main areas of Union activity.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I believe setting up a special committee on the political challenges and the budgetary means available to the Union after 2013 is essential for drawing up specific priorities for the next Union budget and for defining and adopting the regulation on the Multiannual Financial Framework. In the context of the current crisis, it is indeed necessary to rethink how the Union's financial prospects can make up for the damage done, and also to create a framework to address any potential problems in the future.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of setting up this committee since I am of the opinion that it is of crucial importance, in the light of the competences resulting from the Treaty of Lisbon, that the European Parliament adopts a clear strategic line for the post-2013 financial framework, so that political priorities are defined that contribute to the consolidation of European integration. I support more political integration and coordinated and strengthened European governance. My opinion is that the European project will only advance if there is *de facto* solidarity, providing strong economic, social and territorial cohesion. It will be important for this committee to reach a consensus on reforming the system of financing of the EU budget in such a way as to provide a solid basis for negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework. I sit on this committee on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), and am aware of the importance of the work that this committee will undertake and of the difficulties it will encounter. I am, nevertheless, convinced that the great difficulties involved in reaching a consensus on a Europe that has effective solidarity and is more politically integrated will be overcome in the European Parliament. I hope the same is true of the Council.

**Nuno Melo (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The composition and the objectives outlined for this committee will be fundamental in achieving a Multiannual Financial Framework to be implemented starting in 2014 that can be prepared for the great challenges that are foreseen, particularly as regards support for sustainable and qualitative economic growth and for long-term investments, in order to face the long-term effects of the current crisis being felt in the EU.

**Paulo Rangel (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution as it is my opinion that it is essential to set up a committee to start to discuss the post-2013 financial framework, particularly to specify the relationship between the reform of the EU budget financing system and a review of expenditure, so as to provide the Committee on Budgets with a solid basis for negotiations over the new Multiannual Financial Framework.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) We, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, are very much in favour of this committee, which will allow us to find strategic lines for the future by thinking about a way out of the current complex crisis.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – This was a purely organisational vote and our group had no objections to adopting this proposal for a decision. This is why we simply voted in favour.

#### **Proposal for a decision on the setting up and numerical strength of the Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee (B7-0341/2010)**

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) This is a vote for the reorganisation of the numerical strength of the Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee. I have no objections regarding the adoption of this proposal for a decision. I therefore voted in favour of it.

**Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE)**, *in writing*. – This was a purely organisational vote and our group had no objections to adopting this proposal for a decision. This is why we simply voted in favour.

### **10. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes**

*(The sitting was suspended at 14.35 and resumed at 15.00)*

**IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS**

*Vice-President*

### **11. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes**

### **12. Israeli military operation against the humanitarian flotilla and the Gaza blockade (debate)**

**President**. – The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Israeli military operation against the humanitarian flotilla and the Gaza blockade.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Mr President, this is an important debate on Gaza. We discussed the tragic events and their consequences during Monday's Foreign Affairs Council and I have been in permanent contact with the parties. This is an issue of great importance for the European Union, as is evident from the various resolutions that have been tabled.

So let me stress at the outset that what happened on the seas outside Gaza was unacceptable. We said so immediately, loud and clear. Nine people died in international waters under circumstances that demand an inquiry. This must be an inquiry that Israelis, Palestinians and, above all, the people of Turkey can believe in. Israel has announced the creation of an independent commission with the participation of two senior international members as observers. This is a step forward. But the EU will follow closely the conduct and the findings of the Commission before drawing further conclusions.

The military attack on the flotilla has captured the world's attention. The loss of life has been tragic. But we need to remind ourselves why the flotilla was heading for Gaza in the first place. That underlying cause is

the terrible plight of Gaza, which is now back on peoples' radar. Honourable Members know I have seen it for myself: three months ago, when I was the first politician to enter Gaza from the Israeli side for more than a year. What I saw was shocking.

Living next to one of the most modern countries in the world, people carry goods by horse and cart. Israel rightly boasts an excellent education system, and world-class universities. Next door, many children are denied basic schooling. The blockade denies Gaza the bricks and cement which the UN needs to build new schools, hospitals, housing and sanitation. It is a bizarre situation where flour, beans and margarine are allowed in but vinegar, chocolate and fresh meat are not.

The blockade hurts ordinary people, prevents reconstruction and fuels radicalism. The blockade is also not completely effective, but in the wrong way. Many goods are smuggled in through illegal tunnels. They do not go to people in need but to those with money and clout. The blockade empowers Hamas. It gives outsiders with a very different agenda from ours a chance to escalate tensions. On top of all this, the suffering of Gaza does not make Israel more secure.

This cannot go on. Things must change. Out of this, two simple questions arise. How can we help to improve the daily lives of the people of Gaza and how can we make sure that there is security for the people of Israel? We have to answer these questions together. If we try to do it separately, we will fail.

On Monday, European Union Foreign Ministers agreed that we must take this initiative, take concrete steps to tackle the Gaza crisis and use it as a catalyst for peace in this troubled region. It will not be easy to find an agreed way to lift the blockade. It needs the cooperation of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The EU and many others have long called for an end to the blockade. But the political parameters have changed. The circumstances are now different.

First, we need to open the crossings so that humanitarian aid, commercial goods and civilians can enter and exit Gaza normally. That is in line with our well-established position and with Security Council resolutions. But, most importantly, it was laid down in the 2005 agreement on movement and access agreed between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in 2005. This agreement is the key framework.

Second, instead of a list of a very restricted number of products that are allowed in, there should be a short, agreed list of prohibited goods where Israel has legitimate security concerns. I hope, from the discussions which I have had, that we will be moving in the right direction on this.

Third, the European Union has people and a mission in Rafah that could be reactivated and we are ready to support the opening of other land crossings for goods and people and recalibrating our mission or developing a new one.

We are working hard on all action tracks. I have created a task force to bring together all the relevant departments and expertise and will chair its first meeting on Friday. We will send an exploratory mission shortly to see how we can best contribute to a solution which works for the people of Gaza and addresses the concerns of Israel.

The wider issue here is that lifting the blockade should help to bring peace. Gaza is an integral part of a future Palestinian state. So we need to work on reunifying the West Bank with Gaza in the same way that we must help the reconciliation of the Palestinian people. These are all essential ingredients for the two-state solution that remains our goal.

Finally, it is positive that we have succeeded in preserving the Israeli-Palestinian proximity talks, and our Arab partners deserve credit for this. The Quartet should play an important role in engaging the parties and setting the direction for our collective efforts to end Gaza's dangerous isolation and to work for peace in the region. I know that the House will join me in that ambition.

**Ioannis Kasoulides**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, if anybody should insist the most for the inquiry to be impartial, transparent and credible, under the supervision of international authorities, it should be Israel.

A first step in the right direction was decided by the Israelis. More is needed to inspire confidence in the international community. The Gaza blockade must be lifted. President Obama stated that it is unsustainable. Hamas is the sole beneficiary of this blockade. It finances itself from the lucrative transactions of smuggling goods through the numerous tunnels which are then distributed only to those Palestinians who yield to them. An entire population suffers and the Israelis have won nothing. Gilad Shalit is still in captivity.

Madam High Representative, I am sure that your task should be to coordinate, work with and support those international actors in their efforts to reopen the points of terrestrial passage, particularly Karni, that have the capacity to transit goods. An effective mechanism can be agreed for tracing the distribution of aid and aiming at the reconstruction. In the meantime, efforts for the reconciliation of the different Palestinian factions must be intensified and the Palestinian Authority must recover control of Gaza. Finally, Israel's security concerns must be met.

**Véronique De Keyser**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Mr President, it is not you whom I am addressing today, nor is it you Madam High Representative, excuse me. Today, I am addressing those who are listening to us, the activists from the Marmara flotilla who are in the Chamber. We have let you down, we have betrayed you. Right until the last moment, until the night of the attack – and I still have a trace of this on my mobile phone – you were calling us, hoping that the media, governments, Europe would protect you. You did so in vain. You remained alone, without weapons, faced with soldiers who had orders to shoot, in front of the entire international community.

Today, you are asking us for justice, but independent, international justice. You do not trust Israeli justice, even supervised by foreign observers, because your friends were killed, because Israel immediately made all evidence of the attack disappear, destroyed films, photos, confiscated computers, video and still cameras and eliminated all traces only to produce its own version of the assault three days later, with supporting photo montages; because Israel treated you like terrorists, you were imprisoned and sometimes beaten and you could not understand this horror story at all.

You therefore want justice you can believe in, and today you want the siege of Gaza to be lifted immediately and unconditionally, because that is what some of you died for. I vow to you that we will not let you down again. Madam High Representative, do not answer me, answer them. They look at us as they will always look at us, with astounded and incredulous eyes, those who paid for their humanitarian commitment with their lives.

Parliament's joint resolution condemns the attack and demands an international inquiry and the lifting of the blockade, but tomorrow, Parliament will demand that justice is done. If we forget, hundreds of survivors of the Marmara flotilla will come to remind us.

(Applause)

**Niccolò Rinaldi**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, a thought for the victims of the pacifist flotilla but also a thought for Israel, particularly nowadays when nearly the entire international community seems to be critical of this country.

For this reason, my message to the State of Israel today is that we must be ready to listen to what it has to say and that we must not cut off communication. If I could, I would like to quell this anxiety over security, this sense of being fenced in that is felt not only by the Israeli Government but also by public opinion in the country, which feels insecure and misunderstood. I do not wish only security for Israel, however, I also wish for its prosperity, including its moral prosperity. For this reason, our desire to listen to what Israel has to say is prompted by a supreme desire for peace and is backed by a duty to tell its government that we stopped understanding its politics years ago.

Apart from anything else, what happened is not an isolated incident. A common strand links the attack on the flotilla and the expulsion of the Arabs from their homes in East Jerusalem, the building of the wall in Palestinian territory and the blockade and attack on Gaza last year, and also the threats to Mrs Zoabi, the Arab minority parliamentarian. This common political strand often divides the Palestinians and humiliates them and ignores international calls and regulations making extremism stronger everywhere, including in Israel, while thwarting hopes of a peace based on two states for two peoples, perhaps for ever. It is also a common political strand that is increasingly lacking in the moral qualities typical of the great humanistic Hebrew tradition from which we all descend.

Responsibility for the flotilla tragedy also lies, however, with the entire international community and the shadowy Quartet which, for too long, has turned a blind eye to certain dangerous political shifts. Passages in the resolution we are approving reveal a clear will to bring about a change of direction in European policy, particularly now that we have new institutional instruments, and the presence of these additional victims means that we no longer have any excuse not to make our voice heard. I would like it to be the voice of Elie Wiesel, when he wrote that evil cannot be defined as inhumane. This is unfortunate, but politics, at least, should be free of this evil.

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, I believe that, within this Chamber, everyone agrees that we must condemn the attack on the flotilla that was trying to break the Gaza blockade. I believe that everyone agrees that Israeli policy, such as it exists, as it is being established or resuming what it has done for years, will lead and is leading Israel into a hole from which it will be difficult for that state to extricate itself.

We all agree. The problem now is how to effect a change in that policy. You said yourself that we must continue to work towards reconciliation or, shall we say, towards an agreement between the Palestinian forces, which you call groups. I myself prefer to call them forces.

We should add one thing: whether we like it or not – and I for one do not like it – the authority in Gaza is no longer the Palestinian National Authority, it is Hamas. We could have dreamt of something else, but in politics, reality does not always allow us to dream. Therefore, we must now find ways of breaking the blockade and the mental blockade that exists in our minds, in the minds of the Israelis, and perhaps also in the minds of the Palestinians.

I would like to propose one thing. You said: ‘We must lift the blockade’. Not only Rafah. We must open all the entry points. The European Union must, can and is demanding that it control its entry points. With whom? Well, with the Turkish army for example. Personally – and I am being a touch ironic here – I would happily see German and Turkish soldiers controlling Gaza entry points together so that food and construction materials get in but weapons do not.

Let us go further. Let us work towards lifting the blockade. We are not asking for it; let us provide ourselves with the instruments to lift this blockade.

(DE) I would now like to continue speaking in German, because it is always said that many people in Germany and in Europe have a guilty conscience about Israel. I would like to say to you that a guilty conscience does not produce policies. If we want to have a clear conscience and support Israel, we must say to Israel that current events go beyond the bounds of what is acceptable.

Israel's friends are also its critics. The people who are not now prepared to criticise Israel cannot call themselves its friends. We must follow people like David Crossman, who has rightly said inside Israel that what Israel has done is in fundamental conflict with the reason for establishing the state of Israel. The current policy is one which does not want to realise the Israeli Zionist dream, but is, in fact, destroying it. Therefore, we in Europe must not be afraid of criticising the Israelis and the Palestinians. We must not be afraid of saying that we need new stability in the region. We will only achieve this new stability if we, as Europeans, are prepared to act as a force for mediation and order. If we do not do that, there will be no order in the region.

Therefore, I would ask you not just to call for change, but also to make proposals as to how we Europeans can work together with Turkey, which is an important power in the region, to take concrete measures to bring this blockade to an end.

**Peter van Dalen**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (NL) Mr President, on 31 May last, nine people were killed when Israeli commandos were deployed on the *Mavi Marmara*. The soldiers stated that they had been caught unawares by the very uncivil reception they received on that ship, and had felt compelled to open fire with live ammunition. I found that explanation odd. Surely they had not expected to be received on board with tea, coffee and cake?

The big question, therefore, is: why did Israel not use other means to stop the ships? After all, its military leadership had other conceivable options at its disposal that would probably have resulted in far less violence and far fewer casualties. An investigation is highly desirable, therefore, and Israel's response has been excellent. There is to be an in-depth investigation, which will also involve two prominent foreign observers, of whom Nobel Peace Prize winner Lord Trimble is probably the better known. In the meantime, Israel could replace the list of 43 goods permitted to cross the border with a list stating only what is not allowed into Gaza.

**Kyriacos Triantaphyllides**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Mr President, on the morning of 31 May, the Israeli army attacked the freedom flotilla taking humanitarian supplies to the inhabitants of Gaza from the air and sea, cowardly killing nine activists and injuring dozens of others, some of whom are watching us as we speak from the gallery.

This is not the first time that Israeli armed forces have committed crimes against humanity. For 23 consecutive days and nights, they mercilessly pounded Gaza, where 1.5 million people living in densely populated areas

were blockaded, causing the death of 1 400 people, destroying the material infrastructure and leaving behind them ash and burning rubble. Have they been forced to answer for this crime to anyone?

Every day, the occupying forces are undermining international efforts to find a solution to a problem which they have maintained for six decades. They continue to extend the dividing wall, to build new settlements, to expel peaceful Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem. Has Israel been forced to answer for this blatant violation of human rights?

Tomorrow, we shall be called to vote on a joint motion for a resolution condemning the attack by Israeli militia against the freedom flotilla. We must not rest on our laurels in the belief that this discharges our duty. We need, individually and collectively, to work to bring those guilty to account before a court and to finally lift the inhumane blockade of Gaza and achieve peace in the area. We owe it to the dead activists, to the victims on both sides in this long-standing dispute, to the peoples of Israel and Palestine.

**Bastiaan Belder**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (NL) Mr President, it is inconceivable that the Turkish Government and the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) were not involved in the bloody confrontation between the Israeli Navy and the ‘Gaza Freedom Flotilla’ on Monday 31 May. Why is the European Union, why are you, High Representative, so reticent about Turkey’s responsibility for this escalation of a deliberate political provocation?

Baroness Ashton, you know as well as I do that the IHH, an Islamic group, was the driving force behind the freedom flotilla, and that this unusual humanitarian organisation and Hamas are blood brothers. It has even gone so far as to pledge mass Turkish martyrdom for the Palestinian cause (see the statements by its president from last year). High Representative, you know as well as I do that, when it came to the Jewish State, the Turkish Islamists of the IHH were playing with fire, and were doing so under the auspices of the Erdoğan Government. You also know that, in a deeply insulting way, this same Turkish Government then called the Israelis to account after the tragedy.

When is the European Union going to call Turkey, an accession State, to account for the tragedy on the *Mavi Marmara*? Talk about disqualifying itself for EU membership. I should like to make one more appeal; a positive one. High Representative, I ask you to put an end to the intolerable isolation of Gilad Shalit; to see to it that he is released.

**Diane Dodds (NI)**. – Mr President, I should like to say to Baroness Ashton that I welcome her statement to the House today. I well remember her first statement on Israel and Gaza and I recognise that her statement today has been somewhat more measured, although incomplete, as my colleague has just pointed out.

For those of us who have lived under terrorist threat, I have considerable empathy with the plight faced by innocent Israeli citizens who have suffered from indiscriminate rocket attacks. Israel has sought to defend itself from smuggled Iranian rockets by imposing the blockade of Gaza and, to an extent, this tactic has been successful in reducing the attacks on Israeli citizens. I believe that this House ought to defend the right of any state to defend its citizens from such attack.

For ordinary people living in Gaza this has caused difficulty and I have no doubt that, as we have seen, many Members will rise to praise the so-called peace flotilla. There were genuine people on board and yet there were those whose intentions were less than noble. Many of us believe that this was an effort to seek a confrontation in order to get a propaganda coup. Regrettably, that happened and, regrettably, lives were lost.

It would be easy to use this to advance an anti-Israeli agenda in this House but that would not be helpful and would not be helpful to the furtherance of peace.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE)**. – (ES) Mr President, irrespective of the contradictory versions of events – humanitarian flotilla or provocation strategy – Parliament must condemn the use of violence and must condemn the loss of human life, as it is irreparable.

There are causes behind these events, and they have had consequences. Apart from the most distressing consequence which, as I said, is the loss of human life, the consequences include the derailment of the peace process; the distancing between Israel, the European Union and the United States; the separation in relations with moderate Arab countries; and increased tension in the region, with the Iranian nuclear spectre hovering

over the whole area. I also think, Mr President, that the breakdown in relations with Turkey is an important factor.

Baroness Ashton said something that I entirely agree with. Restoring dignity and hope to the Palestinian people will benefit the cause of peace in the region, security in Israel and, above all, the cause of the moderates and the unity of the Palestinian cause.

It is certain – and we should not lose sight of this – that the lifting of the embargo is just one step. It is an important step, but it is just one step along the road towards peace. We are aware of the elements: the recognition of a viable Palestinian state; security for Israel's borders; the resolution of the problem of East Jerusalem; the problem of the settlements, which needs to be brought to an end; and – I am concluding, Mr President – other issues.

There are two issues involved in resolving this matter. One is international support and the other is political will. I am not sure, High Representative, that there is currently a sufficient mobilisation of political will.

**Proinsias De Rossa (S&D).** – Mr President, our resolution is clear in its condemnation of Israel's illegal action in killing nine civilians and injuring 38. We are clear in our demand for an international inquiry which is credible, transparent and independent. The inquiry announced by Israel is none of those things and is not acceptable.

We demand an end to the siege of Gaza. One of the most important elements is paragraph 10 of our resolution, which calls for a reshaping of EU policy towards the Middle East. I would argue that that reshaping must include the diplomatic tool of sanctions in the event that Israel refuses to meet the standards expected of a democratic state in dealing with its friends and with its enemies. Smart sanctions to be applied on a step-by-step basis in the absence of moves by Israel, within a specific timetable, to respect international law.

The Quartet needs to draw Hamas in from the political margins. It would be impossible for any two-state agreement to succeed without their engagement in the process. The most democratic way forward is for early elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council and for the President of the Palestinian Authority, with an undertaking by the participants and by the Quartet, to accept the decision of the people.

Baroness Ashton, words are no longer enough. We must act.

**Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, we have seen with our own eyes that the Gaza blockade is untenable. Its inhabitants depend 80% on international aid. They are not living, they are surviving, without a future and without hope.

Furthermore, the Gaza blockade is counterproductive. It strengthens those very people who it is meant to weaken. As a Fatah leader says, for Gaza's leaders it serves as an excuse for everything: an economy in ruins and their own errors. The European Union must decide to act. At the same time, it must guarantee Israel's security and redouble its efforts to bring the blockade to an end, if need be with European monitoring. Finally, the EU must be a major player speaking with one voice and must make all its budgetary, trade, economic and development policy measures serve one single objective, the long-term coexistence of two states.

**Eva Joly (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, ladies and gentlemen, following our visit to Gaza from 26-28 May 2010, our delegation unanimously called for an immediate, total and permanent lifting of the blockade imposed by Israel.

Our joint resolution was born out of this unanimity faced with this humanitarian and political tragedy, and I hope that a large majority will vote for it. Conveying our message with one voice is not just necessary, it is vital, because it is precisely unity that the European Union has lacked until now and it is precisely unity that it needs today in order to carry weight and to make its presence felt as a major and credible actor for peace.

For Europe, the worst thing would be if the flotilla tragedy were to be followed by indifference and inaction caused by a lack of unity. There needs to be a political reaction by Europe. It no longer simply has the right, but the duty, to act and hold talks as well as to condemn and impose sanctions when peace is threatened by one side or the other.

Madam High Representative, we have a huge responsibility today. We can no longer content ourselves with reconstructing buildings time and again. We must build peace and we must do so now. That demands courage and firmness. You must build alliances, with the United States and Turkey in particular, and you must not

relieve the diplomatic pressure on Israel until the complete lifting of the blockade and the setting up of an independent international inquiry become a reality.

**Sajjad Karim (ECR).** – Mr President, Baroness Ashton, your approach to this matter is commendable. The fact that you, through your office, visited Gaza in the way that you did, and the very public statements that you have made since that time, makes quite clear to Members of this House the seriousness with which you and your office approach this issue.

This is, of course, a humanitarian question along with so many other issues as well, but I bear in mind the history as to why we find ourselves where we are today and I have very clear recollections of debates taking place in this House in 2006, both in February and in April, where so many Members, one after another, urged both the EU and Israel not to cut the people of Gaza loose in this way. But that is exactly what we did and our reaction was wrong. By suffocating the people of Gaza, we find ourselves in this situation today.

There is only one way to move forward now, and that is to face the issue of the blockade head on. There are real practical measures we can take, the first of which must be to ensure that Israel acts in a manner whereby it allows permitted goods through and not simply have a list in the way that they are operating today. Please concentrate your mind on that fact immediately.

**Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, for too long, international institutions and our European bodies have constantly made vows, have used the same words and proclaimed the same fine intentions without any clear action in favour of security and peace in the region and of the existence of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. We now need clear and strong action by the European Union.

There has been an act of piracy, within the meaning of international law, in international waters, against a humanitarian convoy. We will not achieve anything by allowing this masquerade of an inquiry to proceed where the criminal himself creates his own tribunal. Neither will we achieve anything by satisfying ourselves with a vague plan to relax this merciless blockade. It is the lifting of the blockade that we must demand and obtain. You have tools for that.

Yes, let us create European supervision missions in association with other states at land and sea crossing points. Suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement until something is actually done. Stop the import of products from the settlements. Let us stop cooperation in military technology and let us stop arms sales to Israel.

Finally I ask the question: who will carry out a serious inquiry into the beatings of Europeans that have taken place on Israeli territory in Israeli prisons?

To conclude, I would like our Parliament to call for an end to the threats to Knesset Member, Mrs Hanin Zoabi. Madam High Representative, you have the means to act. If you do so, we will be behind you.

**Fiorello Provera (EFD).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, an initial examination of the facts clearly reveals that the aims of the flotilla expedition to Gaza were more political than humanitarian. The convoy was prepared by the IHH, a Turkish organisation linked with Islamic extremism. On the eve of the flotilla's departure, the Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, also wrote that if the ships reached Gaza, it would be a victory for Hamas, and if they were intercepted it would still be a victory.

Hamas's lack of interest in humanitarian ends was confirmed by its refusal to take into Gaza the humanitarian aid that arrived through the port of Ashdod in the Irish ship, the *Rachel Corrie*. If it wins, Hamas will lose not only Israel but also the ANP and the possibility of resuming the peace process. The naval and land blockade around Gaza imposed by Israel and Egypt in 2007 to control the arms trade was also supported a few days ago by ANP President Mahmoud Abbas in his meeting with President Obama, which was reported in all the newspapers.

We need to prevent Gaza becoming a missile attack station against Israel and an element in destabilising the balance in the area and we must also allow plenty of humanitarian aid in to alleviate the situation of the people of Gaza. I call upon the High Representative to extend the objective investigation of the facts to examine the possible involvement of countries such as Turkey and Iran in organising the expedition.

**Daniël van der Stoep (NI).** – (NL) Mr President, armed with various murder weapons, a club of self-styled peace activists set sail for Gaza. The Israeli Navy asked them to stop, but received the reply – and I quote – 'Shut up, go back to Auschwitz'. Yet the soldiers came on board anyway, and were greeted 'peacefully' by



'activists' bearing metal pipes and throwing them overboard. The flotilla's objective was not to convey humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip but to seek provocation of and violent confrontation with Israel.

The passengers on board the *Mavi Marmara*, who included activists from the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), stated that the organisation had close links to Mr Erdoğan, Turkey's prime minister, and that the government of the candidate country was involved in preparing the flotilla. Is that true, and what are you going to do with that information? Is it true that the Turkish organisation IHH present on the ship has links to Hamas? May I remind you that the EU still regards Hamas as a terrorist organisation? I should appreciate your answer to this. At the very least, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) wants to see an independent investigation into Turkey's role in the whole equation. What was the precise nature of the influence of Prime Minister Erdoğan and his associates? I should appreciate your response to this.

**Michael Gahler (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I support the call for an international inquiry, because the inclusion of two international experts in the Israeli inquiry will, in my opinion, definitely not be regarded as adequate on the international stage. This inquiry must determine in its conclusions whether the operation was in breach of international law. For this reason, I suggest that we postpone our assessment until then and do not include this judgment in the resolution.

The fact that a flotilla of this size could set sail and that it was not manned entirely by extremists or notorious opponents of Israel indicates the nature of the intolerable humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are therefore calling for the blockade to be lifted for the sake of the people and not in order to legitimise Hamas. In addition, Israel has not achieved its objectives. It has been said that Gilad Shalit is still being held captive by Hamas. The people of Gaza have not risen up against Hamas. On the contrary, they have been radicalised against Israel. That is not in Israel's interest. Abu Mazen, the representative of the Palestinians who are prepared to cooperate, has not been strengthened in the eyes of his countrymen in relation to Hamas.

I hope that when the Israeli Government meets today, it will implement the announcement made yesterday by Mr Herzog, which stated that the first step would be taken towards easing the blockade. A negative list must replace the positive list. In other words, the border must be opened in principle to all materials and goods, provided they are not weapons or items that can be used to make weapons.

As far as the lifting of the maritime blockade is concerned, Israel should perhaps consider accepting yesterday's proposal by the French and the British for these two friendly nations to inspect any ships travelling to Gaza.

**Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, nothing can justify what happened and I am sorry to say that we are faced with an act of rank amateurism by the Israelis. Perhaps the Israeli leadership is not yet properly aware that Israeli security will be achieved only if the peace process goes ahead and not by raising the tension.

Against this background, the resolution tabled to Parliament is an important response by this institution to the difficult question of Gaza. This affair, with all its dramatic overtones, nevertheless forces Europe to step up the quality of its dealings with the Middle Eastern question. Mrs Ashton, I think you are aware that today, we need new leadership within Europe; stronger action with the aim of setting the indirect negotiations on the right path. Stop this senseless settlement policy and lift the blockade on Gaza.

By adopting this resolution, the European Parliament offers an important benchmark. Make use of it so that European action can make a serious contribution to overcoming the conflict and winning over all extremist positions, while also achieving the goals of the two states.

**Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE).** – (DE) Mr President, our thoughts are with the victims of 31 May and our sympathy goes to their relatives and friends. I want to say that clearly to all of those who call themselves friends of Israel. Friends do not allow their friends to continue pursuing the wrong policy with their eyes wide open.

The operation by the Israeli Government which we are rightly criticising was disproportionate. It was not only unfortunate, it was also mistaken in every respect, and it was completely unworthy of a modern state subject to the rule of law. It seems to me that there is not only a physical blockade of the Gaza strip, there is also a political blockade in Jerusalem, because those in Jerusalem have once again completely misjudged the relationship between short-term military success and long-term political damage.

What can we Europeans do? I believe that there must be a national commission of inquiry. It cannot be in the interest of Israel to have a second Goldstone inquiry, if this commission of inquiry does not take a sensible

approach. The European Union must reopen its border mission and it must have a more robust, extended mandate, so that real checks can be carried out, if we Europeans are to play an active role there again. This is important, but it is also important for us to exert our influence on Hamas. Gilad Shalit must be released and the firing of rockets must cease.

**Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, the nine victims of the Israeli attack on the Gaza flotilla, who were riddled with dozens of bullets, mostly at point-blank range and mostly in the back, could have been one of 42 nationalities, but they are nine Turkish victims.

We can clearly imagine the mobilisation of the government in Turkey and the agitation of public opinion. Moreover, in the light of the actions, reactions and the pressure that Mr Erdoğan's government is putting on the Israeli Government, today some would have us believe that this is a Turkish-Israeli issue and that it is nonetheless ultimate proof that Turkey has decided to turn its back on Europe and proof of its new foreign policy axis.

Madam High Representative, I really would like you to clear up any ambiguity on this subject. It must be said loud and clear that it is a very good thing that Mr Erdoğan is being applauded by Arab public opinion because Mr Erdoğan is proving that using political instruments to act is more effective than violence and more effective than radicalism and extremism. I believe that this is a political lesson that we could encourage and support, and I call on you, Madam High Representative, to state this loud and clear.

**Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Mr President, the Greek Communist Party condemns with disgust and indignation the cold-blooded murderous attack by the Israeli army against the solidarity convoy bringing aid to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. This attack caused dozens of deaths and injuries and has shaken people throughout the world.

This new barbarity on the part of the Israeli state is a link in a long chain of crimes by Israel, which has taken on the proportions of genocide against the Palestinian people.

The provocative military action by the Israeli state is constantly supported and financed by the United States of America, NATO and the European Union and by other imperialist organisations.

The European Union and the governments of its Member States bear serious responsibility. Not only do they tolerate Israeli aggression, not only have they improved their relations with Israel and created a single airspace with the Israeli Government and signed military cooperation agreements, they have also organised large-scale common military exercises, feeding the criminal aggression of Israel against the Palestinian people and against the people in the area in general.

The commission of inquiry set up 'to its measurements' by the Israeli Government to investigate the bloody attack by the Israeli army on the convoy bringing aid to the inhabitants of Gaza insultingly announced that the aim was to safeguard freedom of action of the Israeli militia and to prove the defensive nature of its actions; in other words, to justify and continue its murderous attacks on the Palestinian people and the people in the area in general.

That is why calls by the European Union for an allegedly independent commission of inquiry to be set up are a mockery and hypocritical. The Palestinian people do not need commissions of inquiry which will cover up Israeli crimes against the Palestinians.

It is time to step up the people's fight against imperialism and to create a single, independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

**Niki Tzavela (EFD).** – (EL) Mr President, I should like to express my deep sadness at the deaths of members of the convoy. At the same time, however, I address a call, Lady Ashton, for us not to be caught up in this misfortune and for us to extrapolate an objective theory from these events.

I am sorry but, in the Middle East, we need to be very cautious in terms of the innocent motives of activists. Often we have seen a desire to create martyrs rather than activist action.

Personally, I am surprised that there is a very well organised Turkish activist organisation. With all due respect for NGOs in Turkey, I do not think that Turkey is known for the freedom of its activists, for the freedom of action of those who want to be activists.

For these reasons, Lady Ashton, and so that we can have an objective view of the situation, I call on you to set up a commission of inquiry into the actions and history of the humanitarian organisation IHH.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, what many of my fellow Members, such as Mr Provera and Mr Belder, have said is undoubtedly true, that provocative Islamist forces lay behind the Gaza peace flotilla and that we must ask the government of Turkey, the accession candidate, what its views are on this.

However, the storming of the solidarity flotilla for Gaza by the Israeli military was an act of disproportionate force. Nine people were killed and others were seriously injured. The ships were not carrying weapons, but aid, including wheelchairs and medical equipment, for the suffering people of the Gaza Strip. Israel's undoubtedly legitimate security interests were not really affected by this relief operation. Unnecessary and illegal commando raids of this kind naturally make it increasingly difficult for Israel's international partners, including the European Union, to support the undoubted right of existence of the state of Israel.

However, I must also make it clear at this point that international law and internationally recognised standards of human rights also apply to the Palestinians. It is important for Israel to acknowledge this. For this reason, the blockade of the Gaza strip, which is causing suffering in particular to the Palestinian civilian population, must be regarded as illegal and brought to an end as quickly as possible. I call on our representatives in the Commission and the Council to present this point of view to the Israeli Government.

The storming of the international solidarity flotilla has brought a further setback to the peace process in the Middle East. In order to achieve lasting peace for the Palestinians and for the Middle East, Israel will also have to play its role.

**Michèle Striffler (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, firstly, I would like to express my condolences to the families of the victims of this murderous military operation. The Gaza blockade, in violation of international law, has resulted in a humanitarian disaster and a sustained deterioration of the socio-economic situation.

With 95% of its industrial establishments closed, 42% of its workforce unemployed, and 75% of its population in a situation of food insecurity, the Gaza Strip depends almost entirely on humanitarian aid.

The European Union, which is the leading provider of humanitarian aid destined for the Palestinian Territories, must take the courageous measures necessary to put an end to this situation. I was in Gaza myself two weeks ago. The situation of the people of Gaza is unacceptable from a humanitarian point of view and, as our fellow Member said earlier, Israel's true friends are those who, at this moment in time, dare to criticise it. This blockade is completely counterproductive and unworthy of the Israeli people.

Madam High Representative, we must put an end to this blockade once and for all; all that is needed is a little political courage. We have the chance to do this and we have the means to do it.

**Corina Crețu (S&D).** – (RO) We have truly witnessed serious, deplorable incidents, which have ended in losses of human life, victims of a seemingly never-ending conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. We are observing a blockade which is extremely damaging to peace and destructive to the real prospects for dialogue and reconciliation.

On the other hand, Madam High Representative, as you are aware, the European Union is the biggest donor in the region. This is why I believe that we must also become the biggest political partner in keeping with the huge sums which we provide every year to help the Palestinians inside and outside the Occupied Territories. I think that we can do more to impose respect for human rights in the Middle East, realign Turkey's geostrategic position and get the international community, including the Arab states, to assume a more dynamic role in ensuring a permanent flow of humanitarian aid.

Last but not least, I believe that it is important for us to put forward and promote in a more visible manner the long-term solution of the two states, in spite of those who oppose peace and stability in the region.

**Ivo Vajgl (ALDE).** – (SL) I suppose I ought to start by asking you to observe a minute's silence for the peacekeepers killed in the convoy but, as we are pressed for time, this is my way of remembering them.

Thank you, Baroness Ashton, for your timely statement which has actually restored the European Union's seriousness and dignity. It has also awakened the hope that the resolution which we are about to adopt will mark the beginning of a more consistent and active role for the European Union in the Middle East, a role that will be based on respect for human life, the rule of law, international law and human rights, which are inalienable and apply to all.

We have heard the magic phrase, 'the two-state solution', spoken several times today. Two states, co-existing side by side. We need to look into what progress is really being made towards this goal in the Western Bank as a whole. Let us, therefore, avoid focusing only on the issue of the Gaza Strip, because the whole of this region is waiting for an active policy.

**György Schöpflin (PPE).** – Mr President, this latest crisis has to be seen as a symptom of the profoundly difficult relationship between Israel and Palestine. Why has it been impossible to find a solution to the conflict between them? The easy answer is to blame one side or other as being more responsible. Both sides profess that they do indeed want a peaceful outcome, but what actually takes place says something else.

It is far from evident that a solution acceptable to all is still a part of the mindset of either Israel or the Palestinians. Indeed, they both perceive their interests as being best served by the conflict because they believe any solution would result in their ending up in a weaker position than what they have currently. From the Israeli perspective, although formally there is support for a two-state solution, it is hard to see an Israel that could live on equal terms with a Palestinian state. Such a state would pose an insurmountable security problem.

From the Palestinian perspective – that of Hamas above all – peace would mean the end of its monopoly power in Gaza, and having to share the state with Fatah. Hence, we can see that the present troubled situation is the least bad option for all the involved parties. Until they are given incentives to find an option that is superior to the present, the conflict will continue, tragically.

**Göran Färm (S&D).** – Mr President, I represented the Committee on Budgets in the Parliament delegation to Gaza the week before the events surrounding the ships to Gaza, and I have been there before. Hopefully, this tragic event will at least unite us behind some conclusions and behind a renewed effort for peace.

If the blockade continues, there is no doubt that it will lead to humanitarian disaster. The blockade stops reconstruction of homes and schools, and is therefore also a direct problem for aid via the EU budget and thus, a direct responsibility for the European Parliament. Reconstruction projects have been at a standstill for years because of a shortage of material.

The European Union has to take a lead and put pressure on Israel to change its policies. The present situation is not only a problem for the innocent population of Gaza – most of them children and young people – it also fuels extremism and the black economy. If necessary, I think that the European Union itself should take the responsibility for organising peaceful transport to Gaza.

**Sarah Ludford (ALDE).** – Mr President, I am a friend of Israel, but I do not regard it as delegitimisation of the State of Israel to criticise the actions of the current Israeli Government. I not only regret the nine deaths and thirty-odd injured, but I deplore the overreaction and disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army. I want the blockade to end, with checks on illicit arms.

I will not be supporting the resolution as I think it is absurd to condemn Israel for breach of international law first and to call for an inquiry second, and there is much which is not yet clear, including the role of the Turkish IHH organisation. Israel is capable of holding a credible inquiry and must hold one. I am a friend of Turkey as well as Israel. Turkey has reason for anger, but it is very unwise to put out an official leaflet which talks about Israel having lost its legitimacy with a photo which includes a placard 'Judaism rejects the Zionist state'. I hope both Israel and Turkey come round to reason.

**Sari Essayah (PPE).** – (FI) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, as we have heard here, the fatalities and soldiers' injuries are regrettable, but the objectives of that aid convoy were not as humanitarian as was first assumed: they were very largely political. Turkish activists bent on martyrdom were involved.

It is also worth noting that the aid convoy arrived just as peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians were set to continue. Hamas does not want to continue peace negotiations and simply wanted to stir up trouble. It has refused to allow the flotilla's checked cargo in by road and is merely intent on ending the blockade.

The signal from Israel is that it is prepared to ease the Gaza blockade in the near future. It has also set up an investigative commission which, for the first time, has two international observers as members. These moves on the part of Israel allow us to hope that this critical situation will be alleviated somewhat. It is also worth noting that, unlike what has been claimed in the press, the sea blockade is not in violation of international law.

Israel has every right to expect guarantees that easing the Gaza blockade will not result in Palestinian fighters at the same time having access to weapons and rockets. Genuine peace and prosperity will not come to the region if Hamas gains strength, political authority and military power.

You, Baroness Ashton, and the European Parliament, must call on Hamas to end terrorism, recognise the earlier agreements signed by the PLO and the State of Israel's right to exist, and immediately release Gilad Shalit, whom it seized four years ago.

**María Muñiz De Urquiza (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, I am delighted to hear you committing the European Union's efforts on this issue, and Parliament will monitor the commitments made by the Council and the Commission. Israel's attack on the humanitarian flotilla went beyond its limits of impunity in an attack that has been unanimously described as being in violation of international law: from maritime law to humanitarian law.

It was a violation of international law that massively and disproportionately transcended any consideration relating to Israel's security, which we do, of course, defend. However, Israel's security strategy, which is a preventive one, and the extremely high security thresholds that it has set for itself, cannot continue to be the parameter by which everything else is measured.

What we want and what we are going to ask the EU institutions to propose to the Association Council between the European Union and Israel is firstly, a credible international investigation into the flotilla attack. Secondly, we want the blockade on Gaza to be lifted beyond the system of lists, and for the peace process to be resumed with a view to a viable Palestinian state being created and internationally recognised.

**Dominique Baudis (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, this attack on civilian ships by Israeli commandos clearly demands an impartial and credible inquiry. However, what confidence can we have in a commission that would be the judge in its own case? This attack took place in international waters; it therefore concerns the international community and it affects Europe in particular, as Europe has a Mediterranean coastline.

Europe should make itself heard more and should become more closely involved in the search for a political solution based on two states with each having Jerusalem as its capital. Europe is making significant financial efforts to help develop the Palestinian Territories, but, unfortunately, it is too absent from the political process which should lead to the creation of this Palestinian state.

The financial and budgetary goodwill that we are showing is not enough. We must also express political will and give ourselves the means to make ourselves heard.

**Richard Howitt (S&D).** – Mr President, in my short time, let me simply repeat inside this Chamber the words said to us just outside this morning by six survivors of the attack. They reminded us that, not only did nine people die, but 55 were wounded, and today, seven remain in a serious condition. They said that they represent a coalition of NGOs from 32 different countries. They were Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists – from many religions and cultures. They said their cargo was totally humanitarian, their funding was entirely from individual donations, their commitment was to the principle of non-violence. They said that some of them were assassinated, and now their characters are being assassinated. A ship's captain told how he saw the beating, heard the screaming. They told us they have six ships all ready for a second flotilla in July and that they will keep sending the boats, even if they are attacked again.

They asked us not to use words after the events, but to take action to prevent this happening again. Mr President, they say that a country which asserts its legal right to self-defence should not criticise others for defending themselves and for upholding the rights we should all respect according to international humanitarian law.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** – Mr President, if we are serious about asking for an impartial international inquiry into this tragic incident, we should also avoid rushing to conclusions. I would be cautious today in claiming that this initiative had no connection whatsoever with extremist organisations or with political provocation.

But the crucial point of this debate is to take a balanced approach. While we call on Israel immediately to lift the blockade of Gaza, we also call on Hamas – which has taken power by military means and refuses to recognise Israel's right to existence – immediately to stop all attacks against Israel. Solving the crisis in Gaza and addressing Israeli security interests should be credibly linked.

We call on you, Baroness Ashton, to take the initiative via the Quartet to ensure international monitoring of the Gaza crossings. The position of this Parliament is that we need to reshape the whole of EU policy in the Middle East.

**Simon Busuttil (PPE).** – (MT) Thank you, Mr President. I, too, would like to join my colleagues who condemned the attack on the flotilla which was on its way to Gaza. Mr President, this was the result of a disproportionate action and a blatant violation of international law on the part of Israel. These incidents ended in a tragedy in which a considerable number of people lost their lives. Naturally, all those who advocate a moderate approach to this issue have never denied Israel's right to safeguard and protect its citizens from indiscriminate attacks. However, at the same time, this attitude of Israel's – which seems to labour under the misapprehension that it has a special licence to violate the law, to kill whoever it wants, whenever it deems fit – cannot be tolerated. Therefore, I join those who insist on an impartial inquiry which would establish the actual facts, so that responsibility can be assumed.

**Elena Băsescu (PPE).** – (RO) The situation in Gaza and the deplorable incident between Israeli forces and the humanitarian flotilla have had a negative impact on stability in the Middle East, with direct repercussions for the peace process in the region. The losses of human life and the continuing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip are appalling. I wish to take this opportunity to convey my condolences to the grieving families.

I believe that Israel would stand to gain more if it was more receptive to international cooperation, including with UN agencies. I welcome the steps taken by Israel to set up an inquiry commission, but I feel that they do not go far enough. An international commission needs to be set up which will be independent, credible and impartial. A mechanism is also required for ensuring access to humanitarian aid in Gaza without, however, harming Israel's legitimate security interests.

Madam High Representative, I believe that the European Union must continue its efforts to implement the solution of the two states. I would finally like to appeal to all the parties involved to show restraint to prevent an upsurge in tension in the region. It is also extremely important to cooperate fully with the inquiry commission and to continue the peace process negotiations.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** – Mr President, just a few remarks. Firstly, violence, especially if it ends with loss of life, should always be condemned and fought against. However, it has yet to be determined who was actually the first to use violence in the case of Israel's interception of the Gaza flotilla. Secondly, I congratulate Israel on its decision to include in the investigation process two high-ranking international observers, who will ensure that the process is carried out transparently and impartially. I think this is a wise decision.

We should join the calls by various international actors to Israel to reconsider the Gaza blockade, the lifting of the Gaza blockade, but what will the international community say when rockets start landing again on Israeli citizens and the Hamas militia arms itself to the teeth? The balanced approach has been mentioned, so I would like to support this and say 'yes'.

**Antonio Masip Hidalgo (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, Israel has murdered some heroes of humanitarian solidarity, of generosity and of altruism. I urge the Palestinian Government to make a unilateral declaration of independence at the 1967 borders.

There is a great deal of investigation to be done, because there are many trials to be held and convictions to be handed down, even beyond the motion for a resolution that we are going to vote on. Sooner or later, we need to encourage the creation of a moral court, a court that judges and curbs the violent and aggressive State of Israel.

The Russell War Crimes Tribunal was only what it was in its day, and we should follow its example.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, the fact that this Israeli operation against the flotilla is a disaster, a military disaster, a media disaster, a political disaster and, above all, a human disaster, is a fact that no one denies and none of us here would deny. It is not denied in Israel either.

It also goes without saying that the blockade must be reviewed. However, the fact that our resolution, this 17-point condemnation – 17 points minus one because our Parliament's prosecutors have agreed to mention Gilad Shalit – refrains from any questioning of the motives of some of the passengers of the peace vessel is more than astonishing, it is genuinely shocking.

We all know that there were not only pacifists on board, and this is not slander, Mr Howitt, these are simply facts. We all saw the images of the boat departing, where some were calling for jihad, and we all should see that report by Bavarian Television, which methodically dissects the links that exist between the IHH, the organiser of this flotilla, and Turkish Islamist and anti-semitic movements. That also needed to be said. That also needed to be denounced, because half of the truth is not the truth.

**Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, I agree with the criticism of Israel's actions from my fellow Members, such as Mr Salafranca.

However, if Europe wants to play a relevant role in the Middle East, it must remain a partner of Israel, despite all the criticism. This is compatible with criticism of Israel, but not with hatred or hostility. Unfortunately, I have heard some voices here expressing hatred of this kind. For example, when someone accuses Israel of a long list of crimes, but does not even mention crimes that Hamas has been proven to have committed, I feel that this is unacceptable. When someone makes sweeping accusations of genocide against Israel, I feel that this is unacceptable. When someone says that, because of the actions which we are criticising, it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify Israel's right of existence, I feel that this is unacceptable. We must be careful that we do not make the mistake of backing ourselves into a corner, destroying Europe's moral authority and making Europe largely ineffectual.

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** – Mr President, I too deeply regret the loss of life in the IHH Gaza flotilla. However, I despair at the hysterical outbreak of Israel-bashing in this House. Israel is not perfect, but it is a democracy. It may have made some serious mistakes in this operation, and I await the outcome of the inquiry assisted by a Canadian and British expert before passing judgment, but what is sure is that the IDF had no intention to use lethal force, and the commandos were shocked at the ferocity of the life-threatening attacks they sustained by IHH militants and responded in self-defence.

My question to the High Representative is, why did the government of Turkey collude with this provocative mission? Why were children and women allowed to be taken into a naval blockade area and a potential conflict zone? The blockade was in place to interdict the flow of Iranian-paid arms to an EU-banned terrorist organisation, Hamas, which is hell-bent on killing innocent Israeli civilians. The blockade is a legitimate action, in my view, and we must also take that into consideration.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE).** – (RO) The European Union constantly promotes the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians in any conflict-torn region. The provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza must continue. We must not allow conflicts, regardless of their nature, to have repercussions on the safety of the civilian population in this territory. At the same time, however, we must respond promptly and decisively whenever these humanitarian activities are compromised and used to cover up terrorist or arms-trafficking activities in potential conflict zones.

Israel is an important partner to the European Union in various fields of cooperation. We must use this partnership to identify constructive ways in which the European Union can make a positive contribution in this region. There is no need for us either to defend or accuse. We must find a suitable long-term solution.

**Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE).** – (ES) As an activist for a humanist party, I defend human rights in all circumstances. I therefore also condemn violence, including that of Hamas.

What happened with the flotilla was yet another example of the disproportionate violence and force that the Israeli Government is systematically using against the Palestine people with the consent of the international community, which too often looks the other way.

Baroness Ashton, I ask you to intervene courageously to remove the blockade, to curb the plan for progressive occupation of the historic territories and to remove the wall, of which we should be ashamed. I also ask you to focus your efforts so that the peace process can enable the existence of both states.

Be courageous, Baroness Ashton, because by telling it like it is, Europe and its representatives will also earn the respect of the international community.

**Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE).** – (DA) Mr President, Europe is friends with Israel. This has always been the case and it has a long tradition, but we have not behaved like good friends. We have allowed Israel to flounder along and, to an ever greater extent, destroy not only its own reputation but also its security and its peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. This time, with a certain amount of agreement – not a great amount, but some degree of agreement – Parliament has actually produced a very clear resolution, which I hope will be adopted decisively tomorrow, and I would like to say to you, Baroness Ashton, that you have the means at

your disposal. You have the opportunity to actually make something happen to help Israel now. For, if things continue as they are, it will surely be the end not only for Palestine but also for Israel. I therefore very much hope that we can move away from these very weak, vague wordings where we simply let them carry on as they are and where, at most, we can wave our finger admonishingly but take no action. We have the means. You are aware of them and I hope that you will use them.

**Franz Obermayr (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, it is highly regrettable that it has obviously taken this shocking incident, this serious attack by the Israeli navy on the ships of the Free Gaza movement, for us to focus our attention in detail on this problem. Of course, it is also strange that the Turkish Government has suddenly given its approval to the Free Gaza movement. However, without the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip which has lasted for years and which is in breach of international law, extremist forces would not have had such an easy time of it.

Four things need to be achieved in the region. The first and most important of these is the two-state solution. Secondly, the blockade must undoubtedly be lifted immediately. Israel must agree to an international commission of inquiry rather than an internal one. An international panel of observers for Gaza would also be helpful.

I call on Baroness Ashton to ensure that the EU takes a courageous and honest stand. Calls for change are a good thing, but they are useless unless they are followed up and linked with sanctions.

**Isabelle Durant (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam High Representative, allow me to add one final point. Millions of European and, above all, non-European citizens are expecting a reaction from us, the European Parliament, and from you, the European Commission, that is proportionate to their outrage. Hundreds of thousands of European citizens are expecting the European authorities to do something other than issue declarations that vary in strength. Hundreds of victims of the ships attacked on 31 May can no longer accept either impunity or the violation of international law.

Several of them are here listening to us. They are not all militant Hamas activists, far from it. They are young people – young women in the case of those present here – and they are committed, united Europeans who want peace. The resolution that we will vote on tomorrow must be applied for their sake too, and for the dignity of our institution. We must also combat the radicalisation of these millions of citizens outside Europe or in Europe who, in the absence of a reaction by the European Union, will end up thinking that only radicalisation provides a solution, which clearly is not the case.

Therefore, Madam High Representative, I would like you to understand that what has happened must this time result in this resolution being translated into action.

**Christine De Veyrac (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, the brutal boarding of the *Mavi Marmara* by the Israeli army provokes emotion and condemnation. Emotion, given the nine civilian victims of the assault, and condemnation because this boarding in international waters constitutes a violation of international law.

Through its actions, the Israeli Government is punishing its own people, because in the end, we are seeing the exacerbation of extremes make the ultimate objective of security in the region rather more distant. Yes, now more than ever, the Israeli Government must renounce the policy of force.

However, I would like to note that the heavy media coverage of the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla, orchestrated since it left Turkey, casts doubt on the purely humanitarian goal of that operation. An inquiry would seem essential to shed light not only on the assault, but also on the preparations that preceded that expedition. I would also like the Israeli Government to accept that this inquiry should include substantial international participation in order to finally restore justice in that region.

**Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.** – Mr President, first of all, what is very clear to me in listening to this debate is the significance of our call for a credible inquiry. Honourable Members have different pieces of information, perhaps take different views, but what I am very clear about is that a situation arose which left nine people dead and families and friends who are grieving. Whatever the circumstances, it is enormously important that we have an inquiry in which we can believe and we look forward to seeing where the proposals now take us.

The second thing that I am very clear about is that honourable Members want to make sure that we are in contact with all our different key partners in deciding what we do next. I can confirm that I am touch with Turkey and have been from the first day. I am talking to Israel – I spoke to the Foreign Minister again yesterday; to the Palestinian Authority – I spoke to President Abbas today; to Egypt – I have already been in touch with



them, and their Foreign Minister will come to Brussels to see me on Friday. Over the weekend, I discussed this and other issues with Secretary of State Clinton and, of course, with the Quartet envoy, Tony Blair, whom I have been in touch with every few hours, as he has been travelling to and from Israel three times in the last week, sending messages via him. We discussed this, of course, at our summit with Russia, as I indicated earlier, and we discussed this with all 27 Member States in a long session at the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday. So we are all engaged in this dialogue which is incredibly important in terms of how we move forward.

The third point I wanted to make is the importance of the politics of all of this and recognising what I was trying to say earlier about the ambitions that we have. I want to see a secure Israel living in peace. I have called, on every occasion, for the release of Corporal Shalit. Like honourable Members, I met his father here in Strasbourg not long ago.

But I am also very clear, having visited Gaza, as honourable Members have done too, that the future security of the region depends in part on the ability of the people of Gaza to live an ordinary life; to have that miracle of being able to put down roots and live and support themselves economically and educationally and to have the capacity to work and travel as ordinary people do. Eighty per cent of people in Gaza rely on food which is provided by the international community; most of that through the European Union. A large number of children are not in school, a large number of people are not in work. When I was there, I visited and talked with members of civil society, businesses and human rights' organisations, who spent time with me discussing what their needs should be. I am absolutely certain that the security of the region, of Israel, depends on what can now be done to move forward.

So I have focused my work, as I hope honourable Members would agree I should, on what we can actually do. I can talk, but what can we actually do? We have worked very carefully and closely, through the Quartet and directly, to try and support the changing of the list from the 112 goods being allowed in, as I think it was yesterday, to a list simply of those prohibited goods which need to be stopped in order to make sure that Israel is secure.

I hope we will see progress on that, possibly even today. It would be enormously significant of itself when one considers the enormous amount of goods which are simply not let in: flour is let in but not pasta; sweets are not let in, chocolate is not allowed in; fruit but not dried fruit. We can make a significant difference to the everyday life of people by changing that list.

We are looking too at the different crossings, and honourable Members will, like me, have studied the maps in recent times. How do we make sure that we are able to do this? Yes, we have had a mission to support the crossing at Rafah, which was for people only. This has not been operational but we have kept people on the ground. I have been talking with those in charge of that mission. If you look at Kerem Shalom or Karni, there are perhaps opportunities there too to be able to open the crossings. Again, those of you who have studied them will know that Karni is easiest for goods but Kerem Shalom is probably the one most likely to be opened first.

In other words, we are trying to make sure that we put on the table and that we work to provide serious opportunities for the European Union: making sure that the crossings do start to open, keeping security for Israel, providing goods and enabling people to live their ordinary lives.

The final thing that I wanted to say is that all of this is against a backdrop of supporting the proximity talks which are being led by Senator Mitchell. In all my discussions, I have been encouraging those who are engaged with them to move forward with the proximity talks to real talks this year, in order to try and resolve the issues.

Honourable Members know very well the specifics and the detail of what needs to be addressed but, from my visits not only to Israel and Palestine but within the region, I genuinely feel it is incredibly important to move ahead now, while the world's attention is on the situation, to try and ease the problems in Gaza. I believe this will contribute to what every Member of this House wants, which is a long-term sustainable peace that will allow ordinary people to get on with the lives that they value, to bring up their children, and to have the benefits of the kind of lives that we take for granted.

**President.** – I have received seven motions for resolutions<sup>(3)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

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(3) See Minutes

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2010.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FI) There is understandably an atmosphere of frenzy in this House. The attack on the Gaza aid ship has shocked us all, but a few facts need to be coolly stated.

The sea blockade is not in contravention of international law. It is the result of weekly attacks on Israel. Not one EU Member State would accept responsibility. Gaza was supplied with weapons by land and sea, from Iran, among other countries. The justification for regarding Gaza as a hostile region exists, and the terms of international law on the legality of the sea blockade are being met except on one point: the Treaty of San Remo prohibits the use of a sea blockade to starve a civilian population. On this point, Israel has offered a solution. It wanted aid supplies to be delivered to the port of Ashdod, from where they would be transported to Gaza, eliminating the possibility of weapons being smuggled. It is a reasonable request, considering there have been two illegal attempts at smuggling missiles by sea.

The question is, could violence have been avoided? A Finnish military expert on the Middle East said that footage of the incident clearly showed dozens of activists equipped with sticks, metal rods, knives and heavy objects attacking the commandoes one by one as they descended a rope. At least two of the six Israeli soldiers who were the first to land on deck lost consciousness as a result of the beatings, two were shot, probably with pistols taken from the unconscious soldiers, and two escaped with stab wounds and having lost their equipment by jumping into the sea. From the Israeli Defence Forces' video and audio material, we may conclude that the commandoes opened fire on the activists after this. It is, however, all still a bit hazy as to who did the shooting, when and with what weapons.

Only on the basis of facts can we draw the right conclusions. Shall we do so?

**Traian Ungureanu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – While the joint motion for a resolution on the 'flotilla case' and the Gaza blockade is most welcome and deals with major developments and security risks for the Middle East, I think that the document is still unbalanced with regard to the de facto situation. Gaza is governed by the elected Hamas administration and this should bring direct responsibility for Hamas as a governing party and as a military force. Hamas is labelled a 'terrorist organisation' by the EU, but the motion for a resolution abstains from naming Hamas when it asks for all the attacks on Israel to be stopped immediately. The perpetrator of these indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians is Hamas. The motion for a resolution mentions Turkey and encourages the Turkish Government to contribute to the Middle East peace process. Yet there is no mention in the motion for a resolution of the aggressive stance of the Turkish Government in its new Middle East policy. The Turkish support for the IHH Muslim fundamentalists and other sponsors of the flotilla and the worrying Turkish rapprochement with Iran are not contributing to reducing tension in the Middle East.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MIGUEL ANGEL MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

*Vice-President*

### **13. Annual report on human rights (2008) - EU policies in favour of human rights defenders - Trade in goods used for torture - (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the joint debate on:

- the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: Annual report on human rights (2008),
- the report by Mrs Hautala, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on EU policies in favour of human rights defenders [2009/2199 (INI)] (A7-0157/2010),
- the oral question to the Council by Mr Albertini, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mr Moreira, on behalf of the Committee on International Trade on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 (O-0056/2010 - B7-0303/2010), and
- the oral question to the Commission by Mr Albertini, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mr Moreira, on behalf of the Committee on International Trade on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 (O-0057/2010 - B7-0304/2010).

**Heidi Hautala**, *rapporteur*. – (FI) Mr President, I would like to say how pleased I am with this debate, in which we can discuss the European Union's human rights strategy in depth. I am very glad that Baroness Ashton is here and taking part in the discussion and is presenting her annual report.

Before that, I wish to present the report by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, whose purpose it is to improve the protection of human rights defenders. Every day, we here in Parliament receive petitions from around the world regarding how we might protect people who often put their own lives at risk because they are speaking up for human rights. The petitions come from all continents. Often, we cannot even precisely tell who the human rights defender is, and it is important that we accept that there are very many types: journalists, lawyers, ordinary brave women and men, who set aside their own interests and stand up for human rights – more often than not, the human rights of others.

It was a real privilege for me to draft the Committee's initiative report, because first of all, the protection of human rights defenders is a very key component of human rights policy. There is no human rights policy without human rights defenders.

Secondly, I am sure that the European Union can do a lot more than it does now. Parliament, the High Representative, the new European External Action Service, all of us can work together more effectively and exchange information between us. The European Union can also cooperate more effectively and closely with other international actors. By this, I am referring to the Council of Europe and the UN, for example, and, obviously, the countless NGOs with which we are continuously in contact.

It also has to be said that the Treaty of Lisbon means that this new situation will provide us with more opportunities and impose on us new obligations to work harder to ensure that human rights are stood up for all over the world. This report proposes a few ideas. They are not all new, but I want to point out that some excellent ideas have been put forward that have not, however, been properly put into practice as yet.

For example, when the Czech Republic held the presidency of the Union, the idea was proposed that we could support the establishment of the Shelter Cities network. I believe that this is a way in which we can really help human rights defenders in extreme situations. When I was drafting this report, I realised that the idea had prompted a major response among various NGOs. Some are already now engaged in shelter city work. I believe, however, that the European Union should look a lot more closely at this and invest a lot more in it.

Secondly, I would like to stress the importance of human rights defenders in serious situations being able to get out of a country quickly. Although our human rights people in the Member States and our foreign affairs ministries are very willing to help, they always have to speak to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or its equivalent. I hope that this report will bring about a situation where the Member States that hold the powers of decision regarding visas will give greater consideration to adopting more flexible and speedier practices relating to the issuing of visas.

Thirdly, the report proposes that the European Parliament, the forthcoming European External Action Service and the EU missions abroad should have liaison officers responsible for the protection of human rights defenders. To underline the importance of this, the report also suggests that the High Representative, the Commissioners in Charge of External Relations, and the Special Representatives should do everything they can on their travels to meet human rights defenders. The purpose of all this is that we should really endeavour to redeem the promises and obligations which we are already bound by under the EU guidelines on human rights defenders.

**Gabriele Albertini**, *author*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'. The prohibition applies in all situations and is an overriding rule of international law and, as such, applies to all states. Not only does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights impose this protection of human rights against torture but so do the United Nations Convention and the European Convention.

The European Union and its Member States take these obligations very seriously. Considering also that we celebrated the International Day against Torture last week, we believe that combating torture constitutes an absolute priority for the European Union. To respect these extremely important legal and moral obligations, we therefore need to impose a close control on the trade in equipment designed to inflict torture or other inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

The moment when the regulation was adopted represented a great step forward, as was also confirmed by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on torture. This regulation also serves as a model in terms of

international legislation on the subject. The application of this regulation has not, unfortunately, been as exemplary as its adoption: only seven Member States have submitted one or more of the annual public reports laid down in Article 13 of the regulation, containing detailed information on authorisations granted for the import and export of goods that could be used for torture. These reports constitute an essential element for assessing full compliance with the regulation.

Numerous questions are raised over the final use and destination of the goods when we analyse the authorisations granted. Authorities with responsibility for authorising exports must therefore carry out a more detailed political assessment before proceeding. Neither have many Member States communicated information relating to penalties applicable for infringing the provisions of the Council Regulation, as required in Article 17 of the regulation.

Nearly five years after the adoption of the regulation, the list of goods identified in the Annexes to the regulation must be updated. Man can be very cruel and sometimes it seems that the human imagination for ways of inflicting suffering on others is unlimited. It is therefore of fundamental importance to keep pace with technological developments in this cheerless arena.

For all these reasons, the time has come to table the question to the European Parliament and to call on the European Union and its Member States to show that they are able to keep their promises. As members of the European Parliament, it is our duty, by democratic mandate, to ensure that the institutions work responsibly. This is the reason why we want detailed information on what has been done so far to comply fully with the regulation and also on measures that will enable the situation to be improved in the future.

We welcome, as a first step, the decision of the Committee supervising the application of this regulation at the end of this month. Let us not forget, Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 is not merely fine words but a fundamental and essential instrument that must now be applied in full.

**Vital Moreira**, *author.* – (PT) Baroness Ashton, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Parliament's Committee on International Trade, I have the task of justifying the oral question we are asking jointly with the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the implementation of the regulation that prohibits or controls international trade in goods or instruments that are designed to be, or could be, used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In fact, in 2001, responding to concerns raised by governments and non-governmental organisations about the use of police and security equipment for torture, Parliament adopted a resolution urging the Commission to submit a proposal for European legislation regulating the trade in such items.

The Commission submitted its proposal the following year, and it was adopted in 2005 as Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 of 27 June that year. The regulation introduces binding control for the first time on various types of equipment commonly used in serious violations of human rights but which have not been included on lists of Member States' dual-use military equipment or strategic exports.

It prohibits the export and import of products intended for that purpose that can only have that use and requires authorisations for the export and import of products that can have that use. The regulation requires Member States to provide information and produce reports on the application of its rules. As has been said, the 2005 regulation represents a notable advance in the defence of the most essential human rights, namely, the rights to life and to integrity of the person, which lie at the heart of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as well as international human rights instruments and conventions, including those of the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

The regulation's entry into force was applauded by human rights organisations and, as has already been mentioned, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture welcomed the regulation as an important turning point in the fight against torture and a model to be followed by countries in other regions.

However, ladies and gentlemen, what use is a regulation of this kind if it is not properly implemented? Moreover, how can we even find out whether it is being properly implemented if the Member States, which are responsible for implementing it, do not report their results, as required by the regulation?

In fact, it is deeply frustrating to learn that only seven countries have provided information on their decisions to grant authorisations for the items covered, and even some of the reports contain insufficient information to allow the situation to be properly analysed. We cannot go on accepting that EU Member States continue to consent or turn a blind eye to the manufacture of, and international trade in, items prohibited or controlled by the regulation.

First of all, the Member States must be explicitly urged to fully comply with their obligations, as laid down in the regulation, and to present annual public activity reports promptly, in which they provide detailed information allowing for appropriate public scrutiny. These reports must include the following details as the bare minimum: the number of applications for export or import authorisations received, the items included and the destination countries for each application, as well as the decisions made in each case, or a report of non-activity if that is the case.

It would also be interesting to know more about what measures have been taken or are laid down for breaches of the regulation by commercial operators, because if there is no suitable punishment, there will obviously be non-compliance with the regulation. Lastly, there are grounds for updating and introducing more regular procedures for reviewing the regulation itself and its annexes in particular.

Ladies and gentlemen, this regulation is proof that the protection of human rights may require the prohibition or restriction of trade in certain products. Free trade is certainly not acceptable for instruments of death or torture. We must therefore seriously put this regulation into practice so that it can be the model that it was intended to be for the Union and also for other countries outside the European Union.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative*. – Mr President, I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to discuss human rights in this House. On many occasions, the House has stated its commitment to this subject. It is a commitment that I fully share.

For the European Union, human rights matter. They are at the core of our identity and they are at the heart of what we do around the world. Our own history of entrenching human rights, democracy and the rule of law across 27 Member States is a success story and acts as a source of inspiration to others. So it is logical that we have developed a strong set of mechanisms for promoting these values in different contexts – as the report on human rights and democracy in the world sets out.

To give just one example, over the last 18 months, we have provided EUR 235 million in funding for 900 NGO projects in 100 countries. This work is extremely important and it must continue.

But we are not the only actor and ours is not the only economic and political success story. Therefore, as the world changes, we also need to make sure that we ask ourselves what we could do better.

While human rights are universal, a 'one size fits all' approach does not work. That does not mean we should change the message on the importance of human rights, but there is room to be smarter in how we deliver it. We will make most progress if we approach the human rights agenda in a focused and realistic way. We need to target our efforts, tackling each case based on a detailed understanding of the country at hand.

We also need a sharper focus on results. Previous resolutions of this House have called for more information to better assess the effectiveness of our policies. I share your concern. We must judge our efforts by outcomes, even if our contributions to improving human rights situations are an investment over the long term.

The work of the Human Rights Subcommittee and its Chair, Mrs Hautala, on human rights defenders is an extremely good example of this and I very much welcome the report and its findings and pay tribute to those who have worked so hard on it.

Let me address some specific aspects by making clear that I will continue to meet civil society actors and human rights defenders, both in Brussels and abroad, as I have done in Gaza, in China and, most recently, in Brussels. I expect colleagues in delegations and here in Brussels to do the same.

A good example of being smart and well-organised has been our work on promoting the ratification of the Rome Statute in the run up to the Kampala conference this year. We have worked with specific countries, offering EU support, at delegation and headquarters levels, working with Member States and the EU Presidency.

To name just one success story, when I visited the Seychelles last month, I discussed a range of issues on which they and the EU could strengthen our cooperation, with piracy as a top priority. I also raised the ICC and encouraged the President, Mr Michel, to submit the ratification bill to Parliament. Upon my return to Brussels, I was pleased to receive a letter confirming that the government has now launched this process.

Looking ahead, I want to see what more we can do to support the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. I want to assure this House that work on abolishing the death penalty is a personal priority for me. I will see to it that work advances, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, beginning with the United Nations in September.

As this House knows, the promise of the Lisbon Treaty is a more coherent, more consistent and hence more effective EU foreign policy. This is also a chance for our work on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These will run like a silver thread through everything that we do externally. The External Action Service, once in place, will give us the chance to realise our potential and strengthen our ability to speak with one voice. With its integrated structure, the new Service should help to ensure that human rights issues are reflected in all areas of our external action, including CSDP, development and trade.

In this respect, let me refer to the oral question on trade in goods used for torture. The EU takes its commitment to the fight against torture very seriously. Any shortcomings in the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005 must – and will – be addressed. In that spirit, we have invited Amnesty International and the Omega Research Foundation to present their findings to a meeting later this month of the Regulatory Committee with our Member States.

On human rights, as in other areas, we have to pull together. We need the continued commitment of Member States, of this House and of the other EU institutions. We need to review the work we do regularly and to make sure that we get the best use of all available instruments – from human rights dialogues to EU guidelines, from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to our bilateral assistance and our actions in multilateral fora.

Revisiting our overall EU human rights strategy could be a useful exercise, and I intend to launch a consultation process to inform the development of a new human rights strategy this year.

Honourable Members, dear friends, Eleanor Roosevelt used to say, 'It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness'. This is valid for our human rights policy too. In the European Union, we have many tools to help make the world a better place. We need to mobilise and connect them better. That is what I want to do, maximising the potential of the new Lisbon set-up and continuing to count on your vital support.

**László Tóké**s, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, as shadow rapporteur on behalf of the PPE Group, and also as my group's coordinator for the Subcommittee on Human Rights, first of all, I would like to thank Ms Hautala for her great work on this report. As the votes in the Human Rights Subcommittee showed in April, the report enjoys great support across different groups, as the issue of protection of human rights remains of joint interest to us all. We reached good compromises, taking into account the different points of view.

The EU has already worked out mechanisms and tools of great value so, as I have already emphasised in previous discussions, we have to make sure that we achieve better implementation of the existing guidelines, with the evaluation of existing policies developing more effective protection.

Finally, I strongly encourage Member States to show stronger political will to support the action of human rights defenders, as the report highlights. With the Lisbon Treaty in place, it is important that the protection and security of human rights defenders be made a priority issue in the EU's relationship with third countries and integrated at all levels of the Union's foreign policy, in order to increase the coherence, effectiveness and credibility of the EU's support for human rights.

**Véronique De Keyser**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Mr President, the European Union gives a great deal of hope to the countries that surround us because it continues to embody human rights. However, too often this hope is disappointed because few concrete results back up our noble speeches. We know that human rights are not imposed by force and that it is only gradually and through consistent policies that rely on civil societies and on emerging democratic forces that we can change human rights in the world, in particular, when political regimes are corrupt or dictatorial.

Europe has acquired a wonderful instrument, namely the electoral observation instrument under the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. However, what those of us who participate in electoral observations notice is that in too many cases, elections are declared to be largely flawed or fraudulent, without this necessarily leading to a coordinated and audible reaction on the part of the Council or in European policies.

Finally, when politicians commit fraud, they lie low following the post election period and suppress the population quite severely. That eventually passes and, rather paradoxically, in time we end up legitimising through weariness regimes that are corrupt, which is actually a perverse effect of our instruments.

So, Madam High Representative, I repeat that we support this instrument, but do you intend to have a response strategy that is slightly more audible when we are actually faced with cases such as this? I did not want to quote an example, but unfortunately, there are many.

**Metin Kazak**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (BG) How to limit and regulate the trade in goods used for torture and inhumane punishment is a problem which causes concern in several parliamentary committees. As a liberal, I firmly believe that proper commercial and economic relations based on partnership cannot be established if human rights and freedoms are ignored.

What is the source of both these committees' concern? The list of items used for torture is not detailed. It not only needs to be updated, but a detailed list also needs to be compiled, based on clear criteria, indicating which goods should definitely be banned and whose spread must be controlled by the committees. A number of Member States have omitted to submit annual reports on how they fulfil their obligations under the regulation. Other countries have not supplied information about the enforcement of sanctions in the case of infringement of the regulation's provisions.

Even if there has been a lack of political will hitherto, there is still no excuse for failing to fulfil the obligations relating to this trade. This is why we are using the resolution which we drafted to urge the Commission to publish a detailed report on the trade in goods used for torture. The European Parliament is expecting stronger measures for controlling the production and distribution of these goods, as well as for regulating the international trade in them, which is an integral part of our commitment to respecting human rights.

**Barbara Lochbihler**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Baroness Ashton, it is the EU's stated policy to combat torture throughout the world and much is being done in this respect by implementing the EU anti-torture guidelines and the EU export ban on instruments of torture.

However, it took a report by an NGO to draw the attention of the Commission and Parliament to the loopholes in this export ban, which must be closed immediately. How can we do this? There are enough proposals in the resolution which we will be voting on tomorrow. However, it is completely incomprehensible that the resolution does not name the individual EU Member States which either have not submitted a report or have been shown to be breaching the export ban.

In her current EU human rights report, Baroness Ashton says that countries outside the EU are increasingly watching to see how the EU itself applies the standards for the protection of human rights. This is the right thing to do and it is also quite understandable. We must have a consistent and self-critical human rights policy and, if we want to remain credible, the first objective of the policy must not be to present our own region in a good light.

**Charles Tannock**, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – Mr President, history teaches us that usually countries with the highest standards of human rights are also the most prosperous and peaceful. We should therefore be proud of what the EU has achieved in this respect, but those achievements compel us to redouble our efforts to promote human rights around the world.

We are currently faced with many egregious examples of wanton disregard of human rights. Take the case of Iran, where adulterers, homosexuals, religious minorities, political dissidents and even minors are regularly executed. Look at North Korea, where isolation means we can only surmise what horrific abuses are actually taking place there in their concentration camps, particularly for those attempting to flee that brutal Stalinist nightmare. Consider Burma, where the military junta terrorises the population, and Venezuela, whose leader Hugo Chávez has systematically stifled political dissent and closed down the media.

Closer to home, the award last year of Parliament's Sakharov Prize to Russian human rights defenders underlines our concerns about that country, where impunity still prevails, particularly in the investigation of murdered journalists. And what exactly does their army get up to in the North Caucasus? We do not really know.

Of course, human rights cannot, and must not, be the sole arbiter of the EU's relations with third countries. The People's Republic of China, for example, enjoys a growing economic and strategic relationship with the Union, but continues to brutally suppress fundamental freedoms and even censors the Internet. We have similar links to Saudi Arabia, where alcoholics are beheaded, and Pakistan, which bans the Ahmadi Muslims.

We need to be realistic about what we can actually achieve, but we should never stop trying to convince others of the virtues of our democratic values that have served us so well and are the universal sign of a

civilised society. Prohibiting the trade in instruments that can be used exclusively for torture is one very useful action that the EU can take in demonstrating that we do take this issue very seriously indeed.

**Marie-Christine Vergiat**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, human rights defenders are recognised above all by what they do. They are all those men and women who, often at great risk to their own lives, fight all across the world to implement, serve and defend all the rights established in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in texts which have supplemented it.

I fully identify with that sentence of the report. Yes, our notion of human rights must be that of the United Nations, meaning that we must defend a universal and indivisible notion of human rights. Universal means all across the world, and indivisible means that all human rights must be defended equally, without setting some against others, whether it is a question of civil and political rights, economic and social rights, or environmental and cultural rights.

The European Union has implemented a number of instruments in this area, and I am glad that they are examined closely in the report, including in the light of Parliament's new competences in this area. I would therefore like to thank Mrs Hautala for the quality of her report and the way she agreed to work with us.

This report is rather critical of European Union policy. We all know that, between making speeches and taking action, there is still much to be done. Too often, economic and diplomatic interests take precedence over human rights, and their defenders are the first victims of these ambiguities. European Union policy, just like that of its Member States, often varies according to circumstances. For a human rights activist like me, that remains intolerable.

With this report, we are not only condemning all forms of violence suffered by human rights defenders, but also outlining some courses of action that we must build step by step so that the European Union may strengthen its credibility without exploiting matters in any way.

Yes, Madam High Representative, we have a great deal to do in this area. That was demonstrated by the previous debate, just as it will be demonstrated by the one on Libya tomorrow afternoon, and by the policy which will be adopted on the sale of instruments of torture carried out by some European countries.

**David Campbell Bannerman**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, I have no doubt that all of us here are in favour of human rights. Indeed, many of these are rooted in the finest traditions of English laws – such as the Magna Carta of 1215, which outlawed arbitrary imprisonment, and the work of the British lawyers who wrote much of the European Convention on Human Rights after the war.

But it seems that a worthy agenda of human rights has now been hijacked by greedy lawyers and political opportunists. Over the water from the UK, here in Strasbourg, sits the European Court of Human Rights. Now its Committee of Ministers has ruled that Britain must overturn its ban on allowing prisoners to vote because it violates the human rights of prisoners.

But are human rights not meant to protect decent, law-abiding citizens, not terrorists, hijackers, murderers and law-breakers? Is it really any court's job to ask us, as politicians, to seek votes from the likes of Ian Huntley, the paedophile who murdered two little girls in Soham, in my constituency? Is it justice to seek his approval? Is it right to knock on the cell door of Rose West, a serial killer, securing her support? And what of Abu Qatada, Bin Laden's right-hand man in Europe? Who will he be voting for? Possibly the Liberal Democrats, because they support this nonsense!

Yet, seriously, these large prison populations could swing marginal votes, especially at the local level. So there should be no equivalence of rights between decent, law-abiding citizens and those of murderers and criminals. They forfeited their right to participate in the political process when they took other people's lives, other people's rights and other people's property. What about the rights of victims? What about human responsibilities rather than just rights? Like the euro, I believe the currency of human rights is rapidly being debased. We need a return to good common sense.

**Nicole Sinclaire (NI)**. – Mr President, as the rapporteur points out, under the terms of the United Nations Charter, every Member State has a responsibility to ensure that respect for human rights is universal. The European Convention on Human Rights, however, seems to think differently, as it bestows special rights on some at the expense of others. The special rights, for example, bestowed on travellers have meant that in the UK, in my own West Midlands constituency, local people have seen their own rights eroded.



With the protection of the convention, so-called travellers can build on land that our people have nurtured and set aside for future generations to enjoy. This is known as greenbelt land. With the protection of the convention, travellers enjoy special privileges in health care and education, services built up at great expenses by successive generations.

In my local community, citizens are mounting 24-hour vigils in wind and rain in order to ensure that travellers comply with legal obligations. They are prepared to lie down in the road at great personal risk in order to stop convoys of lorries from delivering concrete and asphalt. These are hardworking, law-abiding citizens who only want to protect their own rights and those of their families. Thanks to the convention, we now have to fight for those rights in the fields and lanes of rural England.

I agree with the rapporteur. We must pay tribute to the defenders of human rights wherever they may be, in Iran, in Gaza, in Cyprus – or, thanks to the convention, in the English countryside. This may seem trivial when compared to the plight of so many people in the world, but the point I am trying to make is that human rights are in danger everywhere; rights that were so hard fought in our own land are as precious to us as they are to anyone else.

**Andrzej Grzyb (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, the European Parliament, and we as Members, place great importance on human rights and the need to uphold them. This is also an important component of international policy, especially now with the new competences and provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. The reports which the rapporteurs have presented are important documents. However, it is not possible to comment on them all in a short speech. We have many partners in the Union, the Council of Europe and the UN, and among those who campaign for and defend human rights.

I would like, firstly, to welcome the fact that dialogue is being conducted in the area of human rights. It does not always bring rapid and good results. This is particularly true if we are talking about neighbourhood policy or the countries of the Eastern Partnership. In my opinion, and this appeal is also directed to Mrs Ashton and Mr Füle, we should create as many incentives and measures for promoting human rights as possible.

I agree with what the High Representative has said, that we should be smarter in how we deliver our message, and all breaches of human rights should meet with a reaction, be it political or also economic. We should support the defenders of human rights. That, among other things, was in Mrs Hautala's report. I would like to express the hope that the Sakharov Prize, which is awarded to human rights defenders by the European Parliament, will result in their being supported by all the institutions of the European Union, so that much better use can be made of this network of prize winners. An EU-Russia Summit was held recently. At the same time, demonstrators in Russia – in Saint Petersburg and Moscow – protested against violation of the right to assembly. There was no reaction from the Union during the demonstrations, and among those who appealed to us about this was a Sakharov laureate.

We are setting up the new External Action Service. At the very outset, let us include in its remit everything which concerns human rights. This will certainly help us to make much better use of all the instruments which the European Union can bring to bear on this matter.

**Vittorio Prodi (S&D).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Vice-President Ashton, the defenders of human rights play a crucial role throughout the world, often putting their lives on the line. Respect for human rights is one of the basic values of the European Union and has always underpinned its construction. This is why it is now important to keep focusing attention on compliance with these rights as a whole.

The work done in Parliament on this subject is crucial in ensuring this and I therefore thank the rapporteur Mrs Hautala for her excellent report to which the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament made a crucial and constructive contribution. We must, in fact, seek to look beyond. I believe the time has come to take clear responsibility, in other words, to begin to treat respect for human rights as a complex phenomenon; we must now seek to achieve a higher and more comprehensive acceptance of these rights. I am firmly convinced, Mr President, that fundamental rights should include the right of equal access to natural resources, to water and also to food, the right to health care, the right to education and the right of access to information.

With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, I also feel we are bound to make the most of the new External Action Service by making sure it encompasses organisations and figures distinguished by their respect for human rights. This morning, in fact, Mrs Ashton mentioned the Russian Federation and our dealings with the Federation in this context. Such challenges, which we face a daily basis, are often

underestimated. The European Union can and must continue to play a leading role on the international stage in taking up such challenges.

**Kristiina Ojula (ALDE).** – (ET) I would also like to begin with a word of thanks to Baroness Ashton, who has been standing up for the protection of human rights, and who also took a very clear standpoint today in her introductory statement. The report drafted by our fellow Member, Heidi Hautala, has drawn attention to a very important aspect. The report notes that trade agreements which contain clauses on human rights would give the European Union the opportunity to demand respect for human rights as a condition for trade.

In order to ensure that the area of human rights does not just remain empty rhetoric, the European Union must significantly increase the coherence of its policies and also help the Member States to coordinate their own policies in relation to third countries. We need to take advantage of the economic and trade levers that we can operate, making use of conditionality, to improve the global human rights situation. Non-harmonised policies allow countries which do not respect human rights, through bilateral relations with individual Member States, to act in their own interests – regardless of the supranational commitment to the protection of human rights – and to undermine our joint efforts.

No special national economic interest can be more important than the values which the European Union as a whole represents. I would therefore ask the High Representative, now and in the future, to provide Parliament with a summary of what kinds of steps she envisages for the respective policies of the European Union Member States ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR).** – (PL) Mrs Ashton, smart delivery of our message – which is how you put it – does not mean having double standards.

It is disturbing – and I am referring here to the European Union, but perhaps not so much to the European Parliament as to the Council and the Commission – that we often treat the same problems in different ways. When human rights are violated in countries which are less interesting to the largest EU Member States from a business or economic point of view, human rights in these countries are an absolute priority for us. However, when human rights are violated in countries which are interesting from the point of view of big business and industry in the largest countries of the Union, then, suddenly, the Union's voice becomes much quieter and much less clear. These are double standards which should be completely avoided.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** – Mr President, let me first emphasise that the report on human rights and democracy in the world is very important and long awaited. It covers the most important human rights issues. However, the major problem remains that the report merely describes the actions of the EU. The European Parliament has more than once expressed a recommendation that the Council should develop indicators and clear benchmarks, which has been mentioned by the Vice-President of the Commission in order to measure the effectiveness of the European Union's human rights policies.

Another issue I would like to mention today is the European Parliament's access to Council and Commission information and relevant documents, which has been limited so far, and, despite several recommendations by Parliament on this issue, the situation has not improved. Let me take as an example human rights dialogues which are carried with the authorities of the relevant countries. Recently, the Council held a round of human rights talks with Russia. We are well aware of the situation of human rights in Russia: the continued killing of journalists, the climate of lawlessness, governmental toughness in dealing with the so-called terrorists in North Caucasus and so on, but what we would like to know is: what was the reaction of the Russians who were present at the human rights dialogue, and are they going to take any action on this? I know my time has finished, but just let me say that I fully understand that human rights fall under the common foreign and security policy but, nevertheless, human rights issues cannot be top secret ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Richard Howitt (S&D).** – Mr President, first can I pay tribute to my friend and colleague, Mrs Hautala, for her report on human rights defenders and also for the excellent way she chairs our human rights subcommittee.

I also want to welcome in this debate the annual human rights report and the painstaking work that is carried out at different levels in good faith for this European Union to honour our human rights obligations.

I welcome the growing number and importance of our human rights dialogues with third countries reflected in the report, but the dialogues, like the report itself, cannot be an end in themselves.

That is why I want to acknowledge the discussions that High Representative Ashton is having with us about how human rights are integrated and mainstreamed to the new external action service. It will be a crucial test of whether we mean what we say.

I want to place on record that we are discussing ideas such as maintaining a horizontal human rights directorate, vesting human rights responsibility at Assistant Secretary-General level as well as maintaining human rights desks in each geographic directorate and in every EU delegation worldwide.

Some of these may be contained in the legal decision and declaration, others may come later, and I do not want to contribute towards any further delay, but, as this Parliament learnt when it wound up its human rights subcommittee only to have to reappoint it, mainstreaming human rights is more easily said than done.

So, when the High Representative commits herself to mainstreaming human rights, I am absolutely sure her commitment is sincere, but in calling it a silver thread running through her new service, this Parliament wants to work with her to ensure it is a thread which does not work loose or get hidden inside the hem.

**Marietje Schaake (ALDE).** – Mr President, I would also like to pay tribute to the colleagues we work on human rights with. It is a really pleasant collaboration on such an important topic.

There can hardly be a more urgent moment to address Europe's responsibility when it comes to human rights in the world. I just want to stress that we, as Members of the European Parliament from all political groups, have just launched a written declaration on behalf of the European people to support the Iranian people and their call for human rights. We have just met with Nazanin Afshin-Jam, who is a human rights leader who focuses on ending child executions. This is just one reminder of the brutal things people do to each other and the practices we really have to stop.

The External Action Service will lead to a more effective and coordinated European foreign policy, and human rights deserve ongoing attention in an integrated, comprehensive manner. Unfortunately, we have a sad competition of geographical areas where human rights violations take place, as well as horizontal issues – such as women's rights and freedom of expression – that need attention because they are being violated.

Iran's regime serves as an example of all these violations. Iran is on our political agendas but the international community is mainly preoccupied with the nuclear challenge. As challenging as this is, we cannot allow this to be a zero-sum game versus human rights. Sanctions will be imposed by the UN and the European Union but I am not necessarily optimistic about the concrete results that these will render. Empowering the population and standing up for their rights as autonomously legitimate may also render bottom-up reforms. Domestic opposition thus far seems to move the Iranian regime more than international sanctions, so this is a clear indicator.

This week, it has been one year since the presidential elections took place in Iran, and they mark the beginning of a renewed and brutal crack down by the regime against its own people. Over the past year, the regime has cut off the minimal freedoms that the population still had and has virtually silenced the opposition. Many have fled and they could have an opportunity if they could be taken into Europe as human rights defenders and dissidents. They could be considered an asset in developing our policies and should not just be seen as a threat or a burden. So I would like to encourage you, High Representative ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR).** – *(PL)* I am very glad that Mrs Ashton has stayed in the Chamber, and that she is with us, because I regard this as an expression of interest in human rights issues. It is true that we differ in Europe on geopolitical, social and political matters, but on questions of human rights, we should speak with one voice, despite the differences which result from our nationality or party affiliation. This is something that should unite us.

However, it is somewhat bizarre that we are not able to defend or protect even those to whom we award prizes. The winner of the Sakharov Prize in 2006 – Alexander Milinkiewicz – is today attacked and repressed in his country. The winners of the Sakharov Prize from last year – Oleg Orlov and Lyudmila Alexeyeva – are also attacked and repressed by the authorities in their country.

I appeal to Mrs Ashton and to us all, but principally to Mrs Ashton, to defend all human rights defenders and, in particular, those whom we have honoured with our prizes.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE).** – (PL) We often promote the defence of human rights, because we consider them to be universal and something to which all people are entitled. By the same token, we cannot stop promoting human rights around the world. We should, however, remember that in calling for action on behalf of human rights in countries where they are violated, we also assume a certain responsibility – a responsibility for the fate of the brave and good people whom we call human rights defenders.

Human rights defenders themselves sometimes become the victims of violations of these rights, and this happens, too, while they are carrying out their duties. Cases of this include murder, death threats, abductions, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, detentions and torture. It is our duty to help all those who risk health, liberty and life for the defence of values which we want to make universally binding. We cannot desert these people.

We need symbolic, emotional and moral action, but also specific legal, political and diplomatic action. These matters are urgent because human rights defenders are being killed. Tomorrow, for example, we are going to discuss the death of the Congolese activist Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, who died several days ago on 2 June. This is happening before our eyes.

**María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, in this joint debate, I am going to refer to the motion for a resolution on the trade in goods that could be used for torture, which we are going to adopt tomorrow. It is an opportunity to deepen Council Regulation (EC) No 1236/2005, and although it is an international example, we should aspire to improve both its application and its wording.

In relation to its application, we should congratulate the seven Member States that comply with the requirement to present annual reports on authorisations of these products, and the 12 Member States that introduced the corresponding criminal legislation by the required deadline. The remaining Member States should follow their example and be more transparent on this issue.

With regard to its wording, it is time to update the list of products in Annex II, the trading of which is banned, so that products with similar effects to those that are currently banned are incorporated into the list of banned products, as the Spanish Presidency is going to propose at the end of the month. This would put an end to the situation that we have now, in which it is possible to trade products with similar effects because, strictly speaking, it is legal.

It should be a symbol of the EU's international identity that no European defence or dual-use equipment can be used for actions that disrupt peace, stability or security and, above all, that they cannot be used for repressive purposes or in situations of human rights violations, and we have a good instrument for ensuring this.

**Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, like the previous speaker, I would like to talk for a moment about the regulation on the ban on trade in goods used for torture. We can see such instruments of torture today in museums of mediaeval history. A shiver runs down your spine when you look at them, but, after all, these things are not only in the past and history, they are also in the present, because there is torture in the world today, and unfortunately, such incidents also take place in countries of the European Union. In connection with this, the problem of the ban on trade in goods used for torture is particularly important. The European Union should fight torture in every form. The ban on trade in goods used in torture should be applied as restrictively as possible.

Attempts to justify torture, for example, as a method in the fight against terrorism, are disturbing. This is definitely the wrong road, because under torture, people will confess to things they did not do, while the real perpetrator very often goes unpunished. Therefore, I would like to make an appeal and call for the regulation and the ban on torture really to be very strictly observed in the European Union.

**Kinga Gál (PPE).** – (HU) Human rights defenders must enjoy special attention, and beyond mere attention, need our help in practical ways, to make sure that respect and attention do not come too late. I consider it important that Parliament expresses an opinion on these questions, and I congratulate Mrs Hautala on the initiative and the excellent work. Since the report sums up in detail the necessary steps, I would only like to address the question of what the European Union needs to do in order to be able to offer effective and very rapid assistance to human rights defenders who need it. It is precisely speed and effectiveness that are, in many cases, the most important, if we are to protect their personal health or even save their lives. Support for the work of human rights defenders is only one aspect of the defence of human rights. This is why it is important that when the European Foreign Service structure is fleshed out, the role of human rights be treated

as important, and that a separate human rights mainstream permeate this work; this is something that the Treaty of Lisbon, as Mrs Ashton also pointed out, has made possible. Now it is your turn; it is up to you to create the practical conditions for doing so.

**Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D).** – (PL) Mr President, when people talk about human rights, a great many fine words are usually said. It is not always like this with actions. Therefore, I would like to give my strong support to those statements and materials of Parliament which very strongly draw attention to the need in the Union for action of a pragmatic nature. It is particularly important to support human rights defenders more effectively than we have been doing. We have particular obligations to these courageous people. In relation to this, I would like to ask Mrs Ashton two specific questions, because it seems to me that this is an important matter.

Currently, work is under way in the Union on preparation of an EU visa code. It is in preparation. In relation to this, I would like to ask if the code will regulate the matter of the issue of visas for human rights defenders in situations where their life is in danger?

Representations of the Union are currently being established. Are there already liaison officers in these new representations who would be involved in ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Jacek Protasiewicz (PPE).** – (PL) Allow me to begin by thanking Mrs Hautala and congratulating her on her report. I welcome, too, the words spoken in this debate by Mrs Ashton, who said that the problem of the observance of human rights is, and will continue to be, at the centre of European foreign policy.

I am troubled, however, by the passivity of our Community when these rights are actually violated, especially when this happens in countries close to home, as was the case recently, for example, in Russia, and also in recent times in Belarus. In Belarus, let me remind you, capital punishment is still in use. Political opponents are given long prison sentences, and citizens' work within society on behalf of independent non-governmental organisations results in harassment from the authorities, and this is happening despite the formal dialogue which has been in progress between the Belarusian authorities and the European Commission for over a year on precisely this subject – the observance of human rights.

Our policy – as can easily be seen – must be more effective and, in particular, Mrs Ashton must react quickly and decisively, especially when other EU institutions fail, as has happened during the current Spanish Presidency, which has unfortunately been very passive in terms of human rights.

Tomorrow, we are going to vote on the resolution on the EU-Russia Summit, and I hope the resolution will contain a stronger reference to the recent unpleasant events in Russia, while in the case of Belarus, words are now not enough. We must use the instruments given to us by the Eastern Partnership, and also others of a financial and economic nature ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I will begin by thanking Mrs Hautala for her report, which is both detailed and comprehensive. I agree that the position of the European Union as a protector of human rights defenders in the world is closely related to its own, internal principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, I support what is contained in the report about appointing local liaison officers in the European missions. Furthermore, I agree with the recommendations concerning assessment of the human rights situation in third countries. A human rights assessment is essential for countries that engage in trade relations with the EU. The significance of applying sanctions to third countries which commit serious human rights violations should be treated with greater determination.

**Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D).** – (SK) The European Union is, without doubt, a world leader in the protection of human rights, which are an integral component of democracy. However, this means that we have many commitments and many obligations towards the world.

Defenders of human rights suffer persecution, tyranny and often physical violence as well, and I am therefore pleased that Mrs Hautala has submitted the report in this form. We should have played a key role in this area following adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, particularly through EU representatives in third countries. So far, we have completely failed to achieve this, and we should therefore employ all instruments under the new powers for monitoring the human rights situation and supporting defenders of human rights. In every country where there is an office of the Commission, qualified political representatives should be appointed

whose priority agenda would be human rights and democracy. I would like to thank the rapporteur once again.

**Charles Goerens (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, if we want to be heard outside the European Union on the issue of respect for human rights, let us first try to be beyond reproach at home.

The European Union has decided to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights as a Union. This powerful, symbolic gesture reflects, I hope, the will of the 27 to converge even more in the area of respect for the obligations entailed by membership of the Council of Europe.

From my point of view, that implies that the 27 should commit themselves to respecting all of the rulings of the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights. Madam High Representative, would you be prepared to make all the Member States of the European Union agree to respect henceforth every ruling from the Court of Human Rights and to consult our Parliament on them? That would help put an end to the curious behaviour that entails us lecturing the rest of the world while ignoring our own responsibilities, the rest of the world being, in particular, the twenty-odd countries that are not members of the European Union ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, I would firstly like to thank Mrs Hautala for the excellent report she has tabled. In her report, she highlights the tools that the European Union possesses to defend human rights and, in particular, one tool that seems essential to me, namely, the human rights clause that features in every trade agreement.

Today, I would like to talk about 28 June. It is the date of the ceremony which, in a few days' time, will commemorate the first anniversary of the *coup d'état* in Honduras, a ceremony that will take place amid the great suffering of the people of Honduras because, since the election that brought Porfirio Lobo to power, the violence has continued: violence against women, violence against human rights defenders and violence against journalists, several of whom have been killed.

Today, despite protests, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is opposing the European Union and the United States, which intend to resume trade activities as if nothing had happened. I would like to call for the European Union to be vigilant and to use tools ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Gerard Batten (EFD).** – Mr President, Baroness Ashton, there is an abuse of human rights in the European Union which hopefully we can do something about as it is quite specific.

I would like to draw your attention to conditions in the Greek prison of Korydallos. This is the only prison in Greece where foreign nationals are held on remand. British citizens extradited to Greece will almost inevitably find themselves in Korydallos.

My constituent, Andrew Symeou, spent 11 months in Korydallos awaiting trial. He is now on bail, but six more British citizens that I know of face extradition and almost inevitable incarceration there.

You may be aware that Korydallos is universally condemned by organisations such as Amnesty International and Fair Trials Abroad as having some of the worst conditions of any prison in the world. It is in clear breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Do you agree with me that ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs.** – Mr President, for those Members who were unable to finish contributions, of course I am always pleased if Members of the European Parliament get in touch with me to raise particular issues.

I just want to say in conclusion to at least part of this that I very much welcome the chance that we have had to have this discussion. Sometimes, the important parts of our work get overtaken by the urgent and I do believe this Parliament has a critical role to play in making sure that we remain true to the founding values that are spelt out in the Treaty of Lisbon and I quote, 'respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'.

Those, in a sense, are the watchwords for the External Action Service, just as they should be the watchwords for all that we do as a European Union and as Member States.

A number of honourable Members have talked about human rights defenders and the importance and significance of continuing the dialogue with them. I have already made it clear that, where we can, we are working to meet with human rights defenders everywhere that I visit in the world and indeed to invite and see human rights defenders in Brussels in my office. Recently, I met with women from Afghanistan to talk about their particular concerns. We will continue to do this. It is an integral part of how the External Action Service should operate.

I know that Mrs De Keyser cannot be here now but I do take her points very much on looking forward on electoral observation. We do need to look again at having a more coherent strategy, both in terms of the preparation for electoral missions, but also better monitoring in the follow-up to that. Her work in monitoring in Sudan very much feeds into the way in which I want to take this forward when we have the service operational, so that we get better at what we do and we use the information and knowledge more effectively.

I have also described that human rights have got to be the thread that binds us in all the relationships that we have. These are important values that need to be consistently applied to people everywhere regardless, but we need to be sure that we understand what they mean and how we should approach their implementation. It is not about special rights; it is about enabling people to be able to access the rights that they are entitled to. That sometimes means that we have to examine how best to support people. Honourable Members who, like me, have worked in the field of those with disabilities will know that actually accessing human rights for disabled people requires us to make positive changes. Sometimes, that is true in other parts of the world, and in other communities as well, but we also need that level of consistency which a number of honourable Members have paid attention to.

In the declaration on political accountability, which will be a feature of what we do as we move forward with the External Action Service, I have foreseen the strengthening of exchange of information and access to documents, which I hope will help honourable Members in some of the comments that have been made on that.

As for structures, I am in discussion on structures, but I am not going to be bound into having structures that actually prevent us from dealing with human rights as effectively as I would like. We are ensuring that human rights is a feature of all of the work of all of the delegations, but I believe it is a feature of what everybody should be doing. It is not a silver thread if we simply put it in a box called human rights and put it in a corner. Too often, that is what I see organisations doing and I will not do that with the External Action Service. It has to be a clear part of everything I do and everything that all those involved do.

Mr Zemke, I just want to pick up your point about the visa code. The Commission did indeed put forward a proposal that would do what I think you were seeking to do. Unfortunately, we have not found favour with all Member States. Any lobbying that the European Parliament is able to do on Member States would be gratefully received. We are working on a way through this but we have to get all Member States to agree to it, so I hope that you will consider that an offer to try and help us with that.

In terms of the accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, it is an important objective, very definitely within the Lisbon Treaty, and we are glad that we have the mandate to work to complete that. But it will be done in parallel with the membership of the individual Member States in terms of the obligations that we have.

Finally, thank you again for this important debate. I have particularly noted the important comments that have been made that will help me be guided for the future and I pay tribute again to the Human Rights Committee for the work that they have done.

**Heidi Hautala**, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, I would like to thank everybody for this extremely interesting exchange of views which I think also laid a good foundation for the cooperation between the High Representative and our work in Parliament on human rights.

Many very important things were said. I believe first of all that, in order to be credible, we have to use the same yardstick to measure similar situations all around the world, understanding of course that the situations may have some nuances and differences, but we should not end up in a situation where we deal with human rights problems in some countries and in others we neglect them.

I also believe very much that in order to have a say on human rights in the world, we need to be able to look at problems within the EU. There are incredible prison conditions within the European Union. The example of the torture tools shows that we are far from being perfect. We are not living up to expectations and our own commitments.

I also believe that in the near future, we should have the courage to look at the contribution and involvement of some of our Member States in the CIA renditions in the fight against terrorism. I know it is a very sensitive subject, but I think we should have the courage to look at this again.

Mr Goerens aired the excellent idea that, when acceding to the European Convention on Human Rights, the 27 member governments should commit themselves to executing the judgments of the Human Rights Court. This would be the least, I think, we can do to make a positive contribution.

Lastly, I would like to say that the European Parliament has new competences. We have to use them wisely to promote human rights. Trade policy is certainly something we should look at more closely to see what we can do, so thank you, Mr Moreira, for contributing to this debate.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolutions<sup>(4)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 12.00.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) The European Union attaches particular importance to respect for human rights, both inside and outside its borders.

The European Union's 10th annual report on human rights in the world in 2008, drafted by the Council and Commission, provides an overview of the activities carried out by European Union institutions with regard to human rights both inside and outside the EU.

I believe that the Commission and Council must make greater efforts to improve the European Union's ability to respond quickly to human rights violations in third countries. In fact, the promotion of human rights, one of the main objectives of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as stipulated in Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union, must be applied rigorously as part of the dialogues and relations which EU institutions conduct with any country in the world.

The Commission must encourage European Union Member States and third countries with which they are currently conducting accession negotiations to sign and ratify all the basic conventions of the United Nations and Council of Europe pertaining to human rights, along with the optional protocols annexed to them, as well as cooperate in devising international procedures and mechanisms relating to human rights.

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), in writing.** – (PL) The defence and promotion of human rights are a priority for the European Union. The situation is still far from being perfect, but the EU has not given up the fight to enforce human rights throughout the world. Belarus, Yemen, Namibia, Guatemala – the list of countries with which the EU is talking on human rights issues is, unfortunately, impressive.

The year 2007 saw establishment of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which finances projects run by civil society to promote the rule of law and democracy. For example, reform of the electoral system in Chad was supported as part of the work of the EIDHR with the sum of EUR 5 million.

As can be imagined, the work of the EU in this field is most effective in relation to candidate countries for EU membership. For example, many positive changes have been recorded in Croatia and Turkey. Croatia has ratified the most important international conventions and is cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, Turkey has begun to attach greater importance to fighting its own traditional problems, such as the work done by children.

These measures should not obscure the fact that even greater efforts in promoting human rights are essential. The current dramatic situation in Kyrgyzstan is sad evidence of this.

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<sup>(4)</sup> See Minutes



**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) The European Union and its institutions remind us at every turn how much they care about respect for human rights throughout the world. Legislation in this area is found in all the treaties and in other strategic documents. I wholeheartedly support all the initiatives mentioned in the Hautala report. However, I would like to take this opportunity to express my unequivocal opposition to the European Parliament's lack of action on the current situation of the Polish minority in Lithuania. Firstly, there is the matter of the Chief Official Ethics Committee of Lithuania, which has launched an inquiry concerning the Lithuanian MEP, Valdemar Tomaševski, who has defended Poles living in Lithuania and called attention to the fact that Lithuania is not respecting international conventions on protection of the rights of national minorities, particularly in the area of language rights. How long is Parliament going to allow its Members to be silenced? Another matter concerns measures currently being taken by the Lithuanian Parliament in relation to a law on education which is intended to restrict the teaching of Polish in Polish schools in Lithuania. Is Parliament going to procrastinate until these schools have been closed down?

**Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE)**, *in writing*. – There are many cases in which family members of human rights defenders (spouses, children, parents) face human rights violations themselves, including killings, death threats, abductions and kidnappings, arbitrary arrest, defamation, job loss, and other actions of harassment and intimidation. These actions generate a climate of terror within their community, and impede on their legitimate work. Support for their families must go beyond the delivery of visas in emergency situations. Neither the short-term nor the long-term needs of their families have been sufficiently addressed. Sometimes, the price paid by human rights defenders is very high. Detention, sometimes murder, causes pain and survival problems for them and their families. We have the duty to help them. EU policies and instruments should substantially address the hardship placed on these families in their own countries. Effective strategies should offer real support and assist these families in finding solutions to their problems, providing effective remedies, including moral support, shelter, help with their reintegration into society, job search and emergency funds. This approach will discourage the cruel measures imposed on families in order to prevent defenders from continuing their work and improve the efficiency of the human rights campaigns.

**Siiri Oviir (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (ET) Regardless of the fact that equal rights between women and men are a question of human rights and belong to the European Union's scale of values, there is still a considerable amount of inequality in political activities and in women's everyday lives. Education has a significant influence on men's and women's opportunities and choices – it opens the door to the labour market and proves decisive in the development of incomes and careers. Regardless of the fact that almost 60% of the EU's women have gone through higher education, at the moment, they are destined to work in less highly-valued jobs and posts than men.

In the last five years, we have indeed achieved the success referred to in the area of women's and men's economic independence, and the employment rate among women has reached almost 60%. At the same time, however, there have been no improvements with regard to closing the gap between women's and men's pay. According to data from 2007, women received, on average, 17% less pay than men (in some countries, the figure was as high as 30%). 2007 was a year of economic growth. We will hear in good time how much the pay gap has widened as a result of the crisis. Given the seriousness of the situation, we have to intensify efforts in the EU, use less empty rhetoric on reducing the difference in pay between women and men, and work out effective measures to combat discrimination related to pay. I am also in favour of these being implemented in the Member States. I agree with the rapporteur's proposal to reduce the gap between women's and men's pay to a level of 0-5% by 2020. I believe that we should apply a zero tolerance approach in Europe to the gap between women's and men's pay.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) Human rights defenders throughout the world play a fundamental role in protecting and supporting fundamental rights by involvement on a daily basis, often at the risk of their own lives.

Supporting human rights defenders has, for a long time, been an element of EU policy on human rights in external relations. This matter has now taken on greater significance, in the light of Articles 3 and 21 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which includes promotion and protection of human rights as a central feature of the EU's external action. In this context, promoting human rights as a fundamental value and as a goal of the Union's foreign policy must be a priority. The structure and human resources of the European External Action Service, which is currently being established, should adequately reflect the needs of monitoring, promoting and supporting measures for the protection of human rights.

I think a very significant element of EU strategy on this matter is the support, protection and security of human rights defenders. These areas should be treated as priorities in the EU's relations with third countries

and should feature at all levels and in all instruments of the Union's foreign policy, to increase the effectiveness and credibility of EU action on this matter. Therefore, I would like to ask the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to ensure the effective inclusion of a human rights clause in international agreements and partnerships and to establish a genuine mechanism for enforcing this clause.

**Nuno Teixeira (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Human rights violations are, regrettably, a constant around the world. It is therefore crucial to raise the level of protection that human rights defenders must enjoy and to enhance their working conditions so that they can achieve the desired results. These international agents to whom I am referring strive to protect human beings against any kind of abuse to which they may be subject on a daily basis. They risk their own lives and give shape to the initiatives and legislation that we produce here.

Since the work they do does not stop at the territorial and geographical borders of the Union but extends throughout the whole world, we should take note of the decisive role that the creation of the European External Action Service and its 'central contact point' can play in enhancing protection for these people. I therefore believe that the creation of incisive measures like those proposed here can lead to a real, positive interaction between dialogues and horizontal and transnational policies, effectively contributing to the pioneering and ever realistic vision that has inspired the European Union's actions in the field of human rights.

#### 14. Situation in the Korean Peninsula (debate)

**President**. – The next item is the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

**Catherine Ashton**, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Mr President, this debate on Korea is most timely. I am aware that the parliamentary delegation has just come back from a visit. The Republic of Korea is a key, like-minded partner in an increasingly important part of the world. It is also an emerging global player, hosting the G20 summit in November.

Our bilateral relationship is developing swiftly. We recently completed negotiations on two linked agreements: an ambitious and comprehensive free trade agreement and an updated framework agreement. The framework agreement, which we signed last month, provides a basis for closer cooperation on major political issues such as human rights, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, climate change and energy security.

Our relations with North Korea are of a different character. With respect to the nuclear issue, which is very serious, the EU fully supports the Six-Party Talks. We have made it clear that progress on denuclearisation is a 'pre-condition' for improving wider relations and, of course, we are implementing the sanctions under UN Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874 in a robust manner.

In the present circumstances, we are not providing normal development aid, but we do offer humanitarian-type assistance, targeting vulnerable areas and groups, and we use our bilateral dialogue to press on all issues of concern. On human rights, where the situation is dramatic, the EU has initiated strong international condemnation, including at the UN. We have stated that improvements on these issues would lead to improved bilateral relations. So far, the response has not been what we have hoped for – but I still believe that frank dialogue is the best approach.

On 26 March, we witnessed the sinking of the *Cheonan*, with the loss of 46 lives. This shocking event has further increased tensions on the peninsula. The results of the investigation into the sinking have been very disturbing, in particular, the evidence of North Korean involvement. Based on these findings, I have fully condemned this atrocious and irresponsible action.

The government of the Republic of Korea has kept us fully informed on its handling of the case, and it has underlined that the EU's position matters greatly to them. I have discussed this matter directly with the Foreign Minister and I have commended the restraint of the authorities of the Republic of Korea. We are continuing to consult closely with them and other interested parties on the appropriate response to the findings of the report. In this context, we support the referral of the case to the UN Security Council, as done by the Republic of Korea on 4 June. Despite recent setbacks, it is important for all countries concerned to step up efforts to promote lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Honourable Members, the European Union will play its full part.

**Christian Ehler**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, it is good to hear the High Representative here in Parliament. High Representative, we feared you would become a budget expert or an expert on the treaties, and we welcome you here as our prime representative in foreign politics.

(DE) We fully support your position with regard to your explicit statement on the sinking of the South Korean frigate. It was extremely important for our partners in South Korea to hear such a clear presentation of the European Union's position.

You mentioned the framework agreement with Korea. Parliament's delegation has just returned from Korea, where the strategic partnership is taken very seriously. There, we were told that very specific steps will be taken on the Korean side to bring the framework agreement to life. I would once again like to make it clear at this point that Parliament and your cabinet worked very well together.

You know that we chose not to travel to North Korea. This decision was made in close coordination with Baroness Ashton, because we wanted to take the same line as she did on this issue. Two things are important to us. We must adopt the free trade agreement this year. We have made it clear that the pressure exerted by the European car industry lobby is unacceptable on this scale. We must look seriously in Parliament at the concerns expressed by some of the parties involved, but the pressure that has been applied to Parliament is not acceptable.

In this context, it is important for us to receive the text from the Member States, because the lobby is exerting pressure and Parliament is willing to resist it. However, we must begin holding readings in Parliament in order to be in a position to adopt the free trade agreement by the end of the year.

**Kristian Vigenin**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, there is one place on earth where the Iron Curtain is as strong as 20 years ago. The turbulent political developments that brought changes and freedom elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc and speeded up the gradual transformation in neighbouring China did not reach the Democratic Republic of Korea.

Our Parliament is discussing today another episode of rising tension between two states who share one nation. This time, the reason is a sunken South Korean ship, an accident caused by the North Korean torpedo, a fact proved by the Joint Investigation Group.

The S&D Group condemns this provocative act, which left 46 dead and put in danger the fragile peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. We welcome the restraint of the South Korean authorities, which succeeded in bringing the escalation of the tension under control before it became an armed conflict.

In every crisis, however, there is a positive element. It is focusing attention and is giving a chance for renewed efforts by the main players to achieve lasting solutions. That is why the resumption of the Six-Party Talks has no alternative, particularly if we take into account the continuing lack of clarity around the nuclear programmes of DPRK.

The joint motion for a resolution to be voted tomorrow is a clear sign that the overwhelming majority in this Parliament shares the same view on the latest tragic event. The same majority is keen to see new engagement by the EU and for it to have a much higher political profile in the efforts to achieve stability and prosperity in the Korean Peninsula.

We highly appreciate and fully support the continuation of the humanitarian aid programmes for the north and the improvement in the trade relations with the south, but we expect more. Now, you have in your hands new tools and new ambition and we expect the EU to bring new value and dynamics to the future negotiations.

Dealing with non-democratic countries, we always face the dilemma of how to approach them. Isolate and sanction, or engage and give incentives? It is not easy to diagnose and choose the best medicine, but I believe that it would be a grave mistake to see the North Korean leadership in a way that is shown in Hollywood movies. I think that the time of change is inevitably approaching, and they know it.

There is, however, no critical mass of people within it who see those changes more as an opportunity rather than a threat. My advice would be to take as the main orientation the necessity to remove the fear of change in North Korea. It is not an easy task but, together with other key players in the region, we could achieve it. It is the only way to avoid other accidents of that kind.

Finally, High Representative, let me underline our satisfaction at your clear and timely response to the sinking of the ship, as well as the clear presentation in front of Parliament today.

**IN THE CHAIR: Diana WALLIS***Vice-President*

**Jelko Kacin**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (SL) Since the Korean War, no incident in this region of the world has been worse or posed a greater danger than the sinking of the South Korean warship, the *Cheonan*.

Although as many as 46 sailors died in the attack, the South Korean Government has maintained its dignity and common sense and, while responding with reserve and in defence of South Korea's statehood, it nevertheless acted decisively. Sabre-rattling, especially if it involves development of nuclear arms, is a threat to the stability and peace of the Korean Peninsula and the wider region.

We, in the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group, sincerely regret the tragic incident and declare our sympathy for and solidarity with the South Korean Government, the families of the sailors killed and all Koreans.

Seoul refrained from naming or accusing the attacker until a comprehensive and credible international investigation had taken place. I was personally able to see the ship. We pay tribute to the South Korean Government for what it has done so far and we strongly support its request that the incident be addressed by the UN Security Council. Only dialogue and renewal of Six-Party Talks will make it possible for North Korea to abandon its nuclear development programme and encourage efforts towards a better future.

However, the improvement of inter-Korean relations requires our assistance, too. We also know that the European Union and South Korea must deepen their relationship in all respects, develop their relations in the areas of international politics, economy, science, culture and education, and increase the exchange of students and young politicians.

Ratification of the free trade agreement would be an appropriate message at this time.

**Roger Helmer**, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – Madam President, I have lived and worked in Korea and last week, I was in Seoul with our European Parliamentary delegation. I heard the account of the *Cheonan* sinking directly from our Korean hosts and it is abundantly clear that North Korea was responsible. The explosion in disputed waters was outside the hull, not inside, and the remains of a North Korean torpedo were found on the seabed near the sunken frigate. As one informed commentator said after reviewing the evidence, if it was not the North Koreans, it must have been the Martians!

While we express our outrage at this act of warfare, let us not forget the appalling human rights situation in North Korea. Shortages of food, water and electricity, media access barred, 200 000 people in concentration camps dying from overwork, from starvation and physical abuse. The 3 a.m. knock on the door. Punishment extended to children and grandchildren. Newborn babies of returned refugees strangled in front of their mothers. In a real sense, the whole of North Korea has been turned into a vast concentration camp.

When we consider their acts of internal repression and external piracy and aggression, their determined pursuit of a nuclear weapon, their prevarication at the Six-Party Talks, their constant sabre-rattling and threats, it is clear that the clique around the 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong Il is a bunch of irrational and paranoid psychopaths. For that reason, I commend the joint motion to the House.

**George Sabin Cutaş (S&D).** – (RO) Tensions in the Korean Peninsula have heightened dramatically since the South Korean ship, the *Cheonan*, was sunk by a North Korea torpedo, which was confirmed by the international investigation group that examined the causes of the explosion. I believe that the European Union must support the Six-Party Talks and maintain the humanitarian aid programmes and communication channels with North Korea. We must encourage the continuation of discussions about closing down North Korea's nuclear programme and pursue the improvement of living conditions in this country.

At the same time, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, as permanent members of the UN Security Council and major political and economic powers in the region, must cooperate to ease the tensions and promote peace and security in the Korean Peninsula.

**Csaba Sógor (PPE).** – (HU) I have not been to North Korea, but I grew up in an almost equally cruel system. I spent the first 24 years of my life in a Communist country, and would like to ask the High Representative – since I know precisely what is going on there and what I am talking about here – not to allow herself to be misled, and secondly, to take a more decisive position. However, you and the European Union can only act decisively if the Commission is asked to act decisively on the territory of the EU, as well, given that this Communist past is still affecting many countries of Eastern Europe. If I mention that there are still language

laws within the EU, there is discrimination against minorities, a nationality law is being introduced, and the concept of collective guilt is still present within the EU, then you, too, will understand why we have no strength, voice or credibility in the world, because the European Union is not regarded as a credible body. We are not considered credible people if we do not put our own house in order first.

**Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D).** – (PL) Madam President, unlike the previous speaker, I have been to Korea several times in recent years. I am talking about North Korea. It is a sad experience, and it seems to me that comparing what happens in Europe with the situation in North Korea is a comparison which is not justified. After all, we are talking about two completely different worlds.

However, what I would like to say is this: I have the impression from my stays in North Korea that the Koreans do, in fact, have to reckon with one country. That one country with which they have to reckon is China, because it is a huge neighbour of Korea's and is a country without which Korea would have colossal problems with its survival. Therefore, in contacts with China – and the Union does have such contacts – I would ask that we constantly place very strong emphasis on the need to increase the role of China in ending what is happening on the Korean Peninsula.

**Barbara Lochbihler (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Madam President, Baroness Ashton, the resolution that has been drawn up is important and represents a move in the right direction. It calls for clarification on the sinking of the ship and an improvement in the relations between the two Korean states. However, the report also deserves serious criticism because of its incomprehensible failure to mention the grave breaches of human rights in North Korea.

We have just been discussing this afternoon how essential it is for a coherent, credible, European foreign policy to ensure that the protection of human rights is systematically and consistently positioned at the heart of every activity. In relation to North Korea, this means, among other things, that we must address the issue of the fate of more than 200 000 political prisoners and take a critical approach to the system of collective family liability for crimes and the use of torture. In addition, we must not be indifferent to the fact that a large part of the population is suffering from malnutrition and even starvation. The EU must call on North Korea to cooperate with the UN human rights bodies. The EU must also play an active and highly intensive role in ensuring that the UN sets up a commission of inquiry, which will carry out a comprehensive assessment of past and current serious breaches of human rights and will also document them. Any other approach would lack credibility.

**Anna Rosbach (EFD).** – (DA) Madam President, the international report clearly states that North Korea was responsible for the loss of the South Korean ship. South Korea has imposed sanctions on North Korea and only the humanitarian aid and transactions relating to Kaesong are continuing. On the other hand, North Korea is constantly being provocative and claims that South Korea is manipulating the facts. What are we doing? We, naturally, are supporting our trade partner in South Korea. I have just returned home from the delegation trip to South Korea. While there, we saw how important this subject has become and that it has reached a deadlock. It is therefore important for the EU to help to calm the situation, although at present, that is almost impossible. At the same time, it is clear that it is not only the US, South Korea and the EU that need to take action on this matter. We need to see both Russia and China come up with a proposal and take action. We need to show a strong response from friends of both North and South Korea and from the partners cooperating with both countries. I therefore support the content of this resolution.

**Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE).** – (SK) North Korea is a collective prison, in which the most serious violations of human rights – hunger and torture – take place on a daily basis.

There are currently estimated to be about 1 500 000 people in concentration camps, and about 100 000 have perished as a result of the strict forced labour. The rest of the population suffer from permanent hunger and persecution, and depend for their survival on international aid. It is essential for the European Parliament and the Union to adopt a clear standpoint on the current alarming situation, which has further deteriorated following the recent attack on the South Korean submarine, the *Cheonan*. Such an attack represents a threat to overall peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

I would like to express my disappointment and regret that the current draft resolution does not include a clear condemnation of the systematic and gross violations of human rights in North Korea. I firmly believe that this issue deserves further discussion during Parliament's July plenary session.

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** – Madam President, the so-called Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, to me is the last example of a brutal Stalinist totalitarian state in the entire world with a cult of

personality to boot and I think the 'Dear Leader' is now actually nurturing his son to take over from his brutal regime. The sinking by a North Korean submarine of a South Korean naval ship with 46 of its crew dead is a murderous act of outrageous proportions. The facts are very clear, and British and Swedish experts participated in the international investigation into this incident.

The People's Republic of China must now use its leverage, both economic and political, over this pariah state and bring it to book, and the DPRK must apologise and compensate the victims' families to whom I would now wish to offer my deepest condolences and commiserations for this tragedy.

**Christian Ehler (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I would like to explain once again in relation to what Mrs Lochbihler said that the groups here in Parliament have agreed not to include the subject of humanitarian rights in the resolution for two reasons. The first is that we are waiting for a report from the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the second is that a whole series of other questions were submitted concerning the death penalty in South Korea. We agreed to table jointly an urgent procedure on the subject in July and then in September or October to consider the subcommittee's report as quickly as possible.

This was not a case of political manoeuvring. We take this issue very seriously. The delegation, which includes members of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, travelled to Korea and specifically raised these issues. This is not political manoeuvring. It is simply that we cannot always draw up omnibus resolutions which cover every possible subject. Instead, we intend to give the subject of human rights its own urgent procedure and its own inherent significance.

**Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.** – Madam President, can I first of all thank Mr Ehler for leading the delegation to Korea – it is very important – and also thank him for the words about my office, who are extremely hard working. I am glad that the collaboration has been so good.

I, too, support, as Mr Ehler will know, the free trade agreement with South Korea, not least because I partly negotiated it. I think it is a 21st century free trade agreement that will be enormously beneficial to the economies of the European Union and to our partner, South Korea. If ever there was a moment that we should ratify this, I believe it is now.

I also recognise that we want to focus our attention in terms of North Korea as Mr Vigenin, Mr Kacin and Mr Cutaş just said and on the Six-Party Talks and the importance that we should give to seeing those talks continue and become successful.

I accept the need there is for making a priority of the relationships that we have and the opportunities that the European Union can bring to it. My only small plea is that I hope I will soon have an External Action Service that will actually be able to carry out the priorities which Parliament has quite rightly and appropriately set for me within this.

I am very conscious too, as Mrs Lochbihler, Mrs Rosbach and Mr Tannock said, of the importance of engaging China or Russia, other key global actors, in the work that we do. This is one of the themes that we are developing in the service: how to use our strategic partnerships in order to try and put leverage and work together to resolve some of these important and very difficult issues.

I also agree with all those, as very vividly expressed by Mr Helmer, Mr Zemke and others, on the human rights situation in North Korea. It is nothing short of appalling. We are doing what we can to support them through humanitarian aid and by putting pressure on, but you already know the difficulties and challenges.

Mr Sógor, what I would say to you is that, in terms of human rights, we need to be vigilant inside and outside of the European Union.

Finally, I share completely the outrage on the incident of the sinking of the *Cheonan*. I have spoken to the Foreign Minister face to face about this and I have expressed my outrage in everything that I have tried to do and I have joined those finally in expressing my condolences to the family and friends of those who were on board and who lost their lives.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolutions<sup>(5)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

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<sup>(5)</sup> See Minutes

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Thursday, 17 June 2010), at 12.00.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Franz Obermayr (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) North Korea has been subject to international criticism since around 2000 because of its nuclear weapons programme and ongoing violations of human rights. The sinking of the South Korean frigate *Cheonan* on 16 March 2010, as a result of which 46 people died, represented a new low point. A commission of experts from South Korea, the USA and other western nations came to the conclusion that the ship was sunk by a North Korean torpedo. Further strengthening of the UN Security Council and EU arms embargo is a tried-and-tested means of putting the North Korean leadership under greater pressure. However, we must ensure that this does not make the already very poor living conditions of the population even worse. Pyongyang will not be able to afford to continue its unrestricted provocation of the international community. North Korea needs at least a few relationships with other countries in order to earn foreign currency. Its exports have fallen by 10% over the last year alone. Carefully applied economic pressure should enable the international community to encourage North Korea to respect international law and human rights.

### **15. Bosnia and Herzegovina (debate)**

**President**. – The next item is the Commission statement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Štefan Füle**, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, it is a pleasure to start with Cathy still here when we were both just discussing a couple of messages that could be shared with you. I wish to thank the European Parliament for the opportunity to make this statement on Bosnia and Herzegovina at this crucial moment for the country.

I share your views regarding the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The political situation has deteriorated and reforms are progressing slowly. 2010 is an election year and some political leaders are engaged in divisive rhetoric. In addition, the economic crisis makes the situation even more difficult.

On the other hand, stability and security are not at risk, according to the reports of EUFOR and EUPM. Let me reassure you that, in these difficult times, the European Union stays fully committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European future. I share this personal commitment with the High Representative, Baroness Ashton. Our goal is a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina, firmly on its way towards the European Union, and we will provide all our support to reach this goal.

However, it is up to the country's authorities to use all available tools and to make all possible efforts to make this happen. Otherwise, the country risks falling behind the rest of the region. We can both say – Cathy Ashton can be a witness – that the high-level meeting in Sarajevo on 2 June reaffirmed the unequivocal European perspective for the Western Balkans based, firstly, on meeting the Copenhagen criteria and, secondly, the conditionality of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The high-level meeting was also an opportunity for the European Union to underline the importance of regional cooperation and to encourage positive steps towards reconciliation to be undertaken by neighbouring countries in the region. Together with all European Union interlocutors, the Commission will continue to work for the transition from the office of the High Representative towards a strengthened European Union presence in the country once the conditions are met. This will, of course, take into account the broader planning on the External Action Service based on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Let me underline one particularly important point here. The Dayton Agreement needs to be fully respected and Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity is a part of it. Challenges in this regard are unacceptable.

As a matter of priority, the European Union also expects political leaders to demonstrate responsibility by bringing the constitutions into line with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. Further constitutional amendments are needed to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a more functional state, but also to comply with Article 2 of the stabilisation and association agreement. I have asked Prime Minister Špirić to set up an institutionalised body on constitutional reform that could remain operational after the elections.

Indeed, as mentioned in your resolution, joining the European Union means accepting its rules and values. All Western Balkan countries and European Union Member States will organise a population census in March 2011. It is urgent that Bosnia and Herzegovina adopts census law. The 2011 census is crucial for promoting

social and economic development and for European Union integration. The Commission is prepared to provide additional technical support and be actively involved in the monitoring of the census. The parliament in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still discussing the draft law on census. The Commission has organised numerous workshops and meetings with Members of Parliament, Ministers and civil servants to explain the importance of the census and urge them to agree on it.

In this challenging environment, the Commission continues to promote reforms through a continuous dialogue with the authorities. The stabilisation and association agreement is likely to enter into force before the end of 2010. In order to meet its commitment under this agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to establish viable government structures able to adopt and implement European Union compatible laws.

As regards the visa dialogue, the Commission proposal presented on 27 May maintains only a limited number of outstanding requirements. Visa liberalisation is a proof that political consensus brings tangible results. As soon as our assessments conclude that all benchmarks are met, the European Parliament, and the Council will codecide on the Commission's proposal.

Let me conclude by underlining that it is important that we all continue to press for a responsible leadership and to give concrete evidence to the population that their future is in the European Union. The resolution presented by Mrs Doris Pack is a positive step in this direction.

**Doris Pack**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Madam President, there are many aspects to the report on Bosnia and Herzegovina and I can only highlight some of them.

The European perspective, which Mr Füle has also spoken about, is obviously the lowest common denominator in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the country has not moved much closer to this goal over the last four years, because the political system and the politicians there are drifting apart and a gap is forming, in particular, between the two entities. One sees itself as a state within a state, while the other has principles of governance that make it impossible for the individual levels to function. There is no common market in this country. There is no common energy supply and there is a lack of common institutions. The constitution of the country, which was drawn up by the international community in Dayton, does not form an effective basis for a functioning constitutional state. In addition, it violates human rights, as has been made clear by the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Mr Füle, we would like to see greater involvement on the part of the EU and, if necessary, the application of sanctions by EU institutions. This *laissez-aller* and *laissez-faire* approach is getting us nowhere. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are used to a different attitude and themselves have a different attitude to us.

You have already discussed visa liberalisation. We hope very much that it will be possible to achieve this.

The battle against criminality and corruption is far from won. In some areas, it has not even really started. Unfortunately, the administration and the political system are part of this corruption. This, together with the weak judicial system, is frightening investors off and preventing new jobs from being created, in particular, for young people.

That brings me to the subject of education. It is regrettable that the structures are outdated and inefficient. The validation of diplomas and the recognition of degrees represent a major problem. Much more must be done in this area, including at the state level. People are not even taking part in our programmes because they do not have the necessary expertise. This is why we need to help them.

Local politicians are the main obstacle to the return and reintegration of refugees. The prime ministers are telling people to come back, but the local politicians are failing to provide electricity and water supplies and, therefore, the refugees are returning to where they came from.

As a result, there is still a huge amount to be done and I hope you will help the people of the country in their task. They deserve our help and they need our support, because they should have a future as part of the European Union.

**Emine Bozkurt**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (NL) Madam President, I should like to start by thanking the rapporteur, Mrs Pack, for her constructive cooperation.

As to Bosnia and Herzegovina: the country's future lies in the European Union. However, to make that future a reality, its political leaders must show common will and resolve and refrain from using nationalistic polarising rhetoric. The Bosnian people must no longer be held to ransom by the unwillingness of their



political leaders. In the field of visa liberalisation, concerted efforts towards reform have indeed proved possible, and visa-free travel to Europe is now within reach for Bosnians.

Yet not only reforms are required on the path towards the EU. It is also important to be a well-functioning state for citizens; a country in which all citizens can participate, irrespective of the group or minority they belong to. The European Court of Human Rights has held that the Bosnian Constitution violates human rights, and it urgently needs to be amended so that all Bosnians have the right to vote and stand for election.

I cannot stress enough the importance of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans in the interests of stability and progress. The Balkan countries have a responsibility to one another to make progress in harmony. Where there are disputes with neighbouring countries, as in the case of Croatia's planned construction of the Pelješac bridge, a negotiated solution is to be found.

Finally, I should like to emphasise that it is of the utmost importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina that it come to terms with the wars of its past. Women who were victims of rape and other sexual violence during the war deserve justice. Bosnia and Herzegovina must punish the perpetrators and give these women more support. This July, it will have been 15 years since the dreadful genocide in Srebrenica. That tragic occurrence must occupy a place in the collective memory of the Balkans. The various resolutions adopted by parliaments in the Western Balkans are most welcome in that context, and the apologies made recently by the President of Croatia for Croatian policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war were also an important gesture and a step towards ethnic reconciliation in the Balkans.

**Sarah Ludford**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Madam President, Bosnia and Herzegovina incites, at least in me, feelings of both affection and frustration. It needs tough love from us and I think that is what it gets from Doris Pack.

The insistence on reform to make the state work properly is not because of some esoteric desire to dictate or to interfere. Commissioner Füle rightly talked about the economic conditions making the political difficulties more acute. A functional state is essential to welcoming investment, taking up EU funding and export opportunities, thus creating jobs. So, reform and economic aspects are intertwined. We desperately need also the reforms to respect human rights and justice and fight corruption. I am very keen on visa-free travel, on the visa liberalisation, and I hope to help in the Foreign Affairs and Civil Liberties Committee to secure that, we hope, by the autumn. That would be very good news, I think, for Bosnian citizens.

**Judith Sargentini**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) Madam President, we in this House are actually addressing the Bosnians; that is, the politicians and the people there. There are two very positive aspects: the forthcoming visa liberalisation and the fact that the political leaders in the Balkans are talking to each other again. We must now take those two positive aspects, look the Bosnian politicians in the eye and say, 'If you can do that, you can also come to an agreement with each other, as that is what is standing in the way of your EU membership. It will happen one day, but it will only happen to a united Bosnia and Herzegovina'.

If we can communicate that message, they will get there. The country still has some work to do, for example, on the position of vulnerable groups in society, the ethnic conflicts and the right to freedom of expression. We welcome all such improvements.

**Eduard Kukan (PPE)**. – (SK) It is an objective fact that the progress achieved by Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path to European integration is considerably slower than that of other states in the region. It is an equally negative fact that we have long witnessed very limited progress in the results of reforms that are linked to future membership of the European Union.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010 is an election year. Thanks to this, or perhaps rather because of it, there have been very poor results for many of the reforms. The current situation in the country is such that there are not many reasons to expect any dramatic changes for the better in this area after the election. The political leadership of the country must clearly understand, however, that it is only concrete results in the reform process and in fulfilling the criteria that can move the country ahead on its European path. One of the most important is constitutional reform, which should introduce a coherent constitutional system with functioning, independent and, above all, effective institutions.

Of equal importance are economic reforms, particularly structural ones, which should eliminate all obstacles on the way to creating a single economic space in the country and restarting the privatisation process. One negative factor is the growth in unemployment, which has reached 40%, according to official statistics.

On the other hand, we should view objectively – and mention as a positive factor – the successful fulfilment of the criteria for introducing a visa-free regime. The resolution we will vote on tomorrow gives an objective assessment of the situation in the country, in my opinion, and shows the willingness of the European Union to help the country in its ambitions for integration, on the assumption that the political leadership and the people manage to tackle and resolve the problems which, prior to securing EU membership, they need to tackle and resolve themselves.

**Hannes Swoboda (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur and also our shadow rapporteur. They have produced a good report. The most important point for me is that both sides which are currently making life difficult in Bosnia and Herzegovina have come to their senses and are retreating from their extreme positions. One of these extreme positions involves constantly calling Bosnia and its integrity into question and threatening to hold referendums which will have no impact except to stir up public opinion and generate hatred. The other extreme position is to call into question the basic structure of Dayton. Does the Dayton Agreement need to be adapted? Yes. It has already been modified, but more work needs to be done.

One side is constantly saying that the office of the High Representative must be abolished and I agree with this. However, the side that is calling for that to happen must prepare the ground for the politicians in the country to be able to take on the responsibility themselves. This must be our objective, but the politicians must also play their part. In addition, at the next election, the voters will hopefully elect politicians who are prepared to be responsible for their own country.

**Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE).** – Madam President, the European Union has repeatedly offered its commitment to EU membership for the Western Balkan countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, but, as we all know, the primary responsibility for the real reforms and for accession lies with the country, and it depends on its will and capacity to implement the Copenhagen criteria and the commitments taken.

We all know, and it has been said here, that at present, progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina is limited but, at the same time, we know that the fragmentation of decision making, of legislation, or the overlapping competences, is rooted to an important extent in the provisions of the Dayton Agreements, which, it is true, were necessary to stop the killings.

Responsibilities are shared between the international community, including the European Union, and domestic authorities. I think that this is true more than in other countries in the Balkans. We have been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1995 with policies, human resources, energy and funds.

We must support more, and more actively, the authorities and primarily the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would like to make two comments on visa liberalisation. Firstly, in relation to the supposed danger of exporting organised crime if visa requirements are eliminated, I would like to stress that this is not true. On the contrary, in those countries where there is no visa requirement, there is less organised crime, because we basically eliminated organised crime which is related to visas and to trafficking in the countries where such a requirement exists.

The second argument I would like to put to you is that people who travel to study, to visit, to make friends, to learn new things, change their vision when they return to their countries. They are more demanding of the authorities in their countries. They ask for more accountability and they are the people who can push for and who can implement and fulfil the reforms in the country.

I have given two arguments in favour of visa liberalisation for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I hope that this will happen during 2010.

**Zoran Thaler (S&D).** – (SL) Commissioner Füle and the rapporteur, Mrs Pack, are right in observing that we have not, in the main, received good news from Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past few years.

I think that 2010 should be a turning point for Bosnia. First of all, it needs to avail itself of the preparedness of the European Union to liberalise visas. Now it is up to the Bosnian politicians to do their bit.

Secondly, Bosnia and Herzegovina should take advantage of the positive conditions in its region. Croatia and Serbia now have governments which are in favour of a united, whole and undivided Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thirdly, the October elections will be a great opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina, offering its voters an opportunity to elect politicians who are prepared, and have the capacity, to move the country forward.

After the elections, we need a new agreement, a post-Dayton agreement, which will bring about a functioning state and government. That is something that Bosnia and Herzegovina currently lacks. In addition, this agreement must ensure the long-term existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it must contain international legal guarantees from the European Union, the United Nations and Croatia and Serbia. We are prepared to do everything to get to that point.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, 15 years after the Dayton Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a certain amount of limited progress, but has really not come very far. We should not therefore deceive ourselves about this. People often say that the Dayton Agreement is fundamentally all right, that it just needs to be applied properly and that better politicians must be found, but this is not true. The current structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not fully functional. The country must be transformed into a true federation made up of three peoples with equal rights. Instead of the many small, inflexible cantons, it must be organised into larger, more efficient regions of mixed nationalities. The central bodies of the state must, of course, also be strengthened and the minorities must be given basic human rights and their position must be reinforced, as the judgment of the court in Strasbourg stated.

Therefore, root and branch reform of the state is required. However, this reform must be initiated by forces within the country itself. We can only offer them support. This is where the major problem lies. It is not just Mr Dodik, but it is mainly Mr Dodik who is blocking every attempt at genuine reform. This means that we must do everything possible to encourage the development of a young political elite within the country. I welcome the fact that one of the areas which Mrs Pack's excellent report focuses on is culture and education. This country needs a complete education system which is worthy of its great history, from multinational nurseries through to a new European university.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country which was not only characterised by conflict, but also by highly exemplary tolerance. This is where a tolerant European form of Islam has developed. This is where, during the Austrian era, the first Islamic law in Europe was enacted, which remains an example to this day. Many people in this country were able to live together peacefully. The Bosnians can be proud of their history and if they can develop something of the same spirit again and bring it into a modern Europe, I believe that 2010 could be a positive turning point for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Anna Ibrisagic (PPE).** – (SV) Madam President, I would like to thank Mrs Pack for a balanced and extremely objective report, but I would also like to thank Mr Füle for the enormous amount of interest and the knowledge that he demonstrates in his work in relation to this interesting but very complicated part of our Europe.

You are absolutely right, Commissioner, when you say that Bosnia's territorial integrity cannot and must not be called into question. If I had to choose one thing that I would like to emphasise today, it would be visa liberalisation. I very much hope that we will succeed in concluding the visa liberalisation process before the election in October. If we do not have time to do this, to send this signal, we must send a clear signal from the Commission that we will conclude this process in the very near future. Otherwise we will, unfortunately, jeopardise both the result of the election and people's interest in participating in the election in Bosnia.

**Katarína Neveďalová (S&D).** – (SK) Unfortunately, the Balkans and the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina are still something of a powder keg.

I personally believe that it is very important for the European Union that we maintain the strong influence we have in this region, and for us to show the region, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, that they have the possibility of a European future, and one of the areas where we can demonstrate this is in the liberalisation of the visa regime, which I support very much.

I also believe that we can no longer change the old politicians, but we can show the young generation and new generations that the EU is here for them, whether through training, or through the fact that we are supporting more exchanges between young people in the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made less progress than any other country in the Western Balkans in meeting the criteria laid down by the European Commission, even though this is the region where the international community and the European Union have had the greatest presence, with *ad hoc* institutions and financial aid. Bosnia and Herzegovina is still, in fact, posing great difficulties. The European Union cannot consider the future membership of a country where the High Representative is still present and plays an active part in the political

decision-making process. Progress will therefore be greatly dependent on the gradual withdrawal of the Office of the High Representative.

Neither it is clear how the various political partners can cooperate. The country is divided between the Serb Republic and the Federation, as well as being divided into three main ethnic groups, each representing a minority in its own part of the country. As a result, the population has fallen over the last 10 years from 4.5 million to 3.4 million inhabitants. It seems that the people themselves are no longer convinced that there is a future for their country. The prospect of membership of the European Union was offered to Bosnia and Herzegovina, considering it as a single country and not as separate territorial parts. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina must therefore decide whether they wish to be part of a single country before any other decision over membership can be made.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE).** – (RO) The proposal to waive the visa scheme for Bosnia and Herzegovina should encourage this country to make even more progress in the areas of justice reform, combating corruption and organised crime and consolidating the administration system. I hope that this will happen. I was very surprised in Sarajevo to hear that representatives of civil society were asking us not to support the visa waiver because this would signal our support for the current politicians to return to power.

The European Union must present a clear, realistic and inspiring accession programme, which will encourage all countries in the Western Balkans to participate in viable regional cooperation and, consequently, in permanent reconciliation. The EU must propose a number of short-term objectives which Bosnia can meet so that its citizens can see the progress made and be motivated to continue the reform process. Such a system could be applied in every Western Balkan state.

**Csaba Sógor (PPE).** – (HU) The European Union had only one answer to Sarajevo and Srebrenica: Dayton. Several people here have said that we need to find a different tone, and this is not the tone of economic and political sanctions, but that of which Mr Posselt has also spoken. We, the EU, are more than an economic community of interests. Culture, religion and education have been mentioned. I can say one thing, and urge my colleagues on one matter. There will be peace in Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina will be a country of independent, free and happy people only when we, the EU, set an example, when every national minority within the EU is able to decide on the use of its taxes and its native language, and when they are not being discriminated against but are given territorial and cultural autonomy. The key to the future as far as Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned is for the minorities in the EU to be given the right to self-determination.

**Štefan Füle, Member of the Commission.** – Madam President, let me start where this very useful debate has ended. I think we are united in our messages. The draft resolution has generated a debate which was about these united messages. I think it shows our joint commitment but it also underlines the seriousness of the situation we face in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I think it is clear from this debate – and I fully concur with this – that politicians, above all, politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have to resume the responsibilities that they have vis-à-vis the citizens and vis-à-vis the country. I also fully agree that the best way to prove it is through concrete progress. Again, the case was made that visa liberalisation has shown that there is a way for the politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina not only to agree on something, but actually to do a very good job in implementing a rather demanding road map leading us to the visa-free regime.

I think we are also clear on what the short-term and the medium-term priorities are. Regarding the short-term priorities, firstly there is definitely the compliance of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution with the European Convention on Human Rights and the SAA agreement; secondly, the adoption of the state-level census law; and, thirdly, the fulfilment of the outstanding benchmark for visa liberalisation.

At the same time, I do not think we should just wait for the elections to bring certain results in October. We need to start thinking now about the medium term – a holistic, but, at the same time, comprehensive approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Already now, we should work on momentum on the window of opportunity, which should be presented by the results of the October elections. I think we need to encourage the politicians during the pre-election campaign to clearly state their vision of the future of Bosnia Herzegovina, their view of the European future and the European relationship and aspirations of that country. There will be many challenges after the elections, including further changes in constitutions, and we need to make sure that both of us – the politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU – are ready for the greater part of the ownership to be assumed by the politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I think it is time for these elections to end the Dayton era and put us in a European era.

**President.** – I have received one motion for a resolution<sup>(6)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The will take place tomorrow (Thursday, 17 June 2010) at 12.00.

## **16. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes**

*(The sitting was suspended at 18.55 and resumed at 21.00)*

**IN THE CHAIR: LÁSZLÓ TÓKÉS**

*Vice-President*

## **17. EU-US air agreement (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the statement by the Commission on the EU-US air agreement [2010/2724(RSP)].

**Kristalina Georgieva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I would like first to thank Parliament for the opportunity to present the outcome of the negotiations with the United States on the Second Stage Air Services Agreement.

Earlier this year, on 25 March, the European Commission initialled the Second Stage Agreement – an agreement of which Parliament has been very supportive. Parliament played a hugely constructive role throughout these negotiations, for which the Commission is extremely grateful.

Let me go through the key elements of the Second Stage Agreement. This agreement builds on the First Stage Agreement, in effect since 30 March 2008, by creating the prospects for additional investment and market access opportunities, as well as further strengthening the framework of cooperation on regulatory issues such as the environment, social protection, competition and security.

On the environment, the draft Second Stage Agreement establishes a robust framework for tackling the local and global environmental challenges affecting Europe and the US through the pursuit of joint projects addressing practical solutions such as cleaner in-flight and air traffic management technologies and cooperation in international forums such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Both sides also formally recognise the importance of avoiding duplication and enhancing the compatibility of their respective market-based measures. I would mention here, in particular, the emission trading scheme.

Europe is also set to benefit from progress made in the area of security, where the agreement seeks to reduce the security burden on airports through the promotion of assessment activities and timely consultation on future requirements. In the area of competition, the agreement enhances cooperation between the responsible authorities as well as the transparency and predictability of regulatory decisions on both sides of the Atlantic.

For the first time in such an aviation agreement, the need to balance market access opportunities with strong social protection has been recognised through a commitment to implementing the provisions of the agreement in a way which does not undermine labour rights.

On the commercial front, Europe has gained further rights, including immediate access to the 'Fly America' programme (with the exception of defence), which, up to now, restricted US Government-funded air transport to US carriers only.

But perhaps the most important element of the draft agreement is the commitment to move forward. As part of the agreement, Europe and the United States have committed to the goal of removing the remaining market barriers that face the industry, including those that limit airlines' access to global capital. Progress towards this goal will be reviewed annually and will involve working together through the Joint Committee. Together with a high-level review if progress is too slow, we have a targeted approach for advancing in this area.

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<sup>(6)</sup> See Minutes

Both sides have an incentive to make progress in this area through the guarantee of additional rights to operate passenger seventh freedom rights and develop stakes in third-country carriers.

To summarise, the agreement advances cooperation across a wide range of regulatory matters, including areas such as security, consumer protection, the role of the Joint Committee and the environment. It delivers immediate and future additional commercial opportunities, establishes a road map for change in the vital area of investment reform and, importantly, secures the benefits of the existing First Stage Agreement that would have been lost if we had not reached this Second Stage Agreement. Some of them would have been lost.

A study commissioned to examine the benefit of the First and Second Stage Agreements has estimated that it could be worth up to EUR 12 billion in economic benefits and up to 80 000 new jobs – both very valuable in the current economic climate.

For these reasons, I hope that Parliament will support this important agreement.

**Mathieu Grosch**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, the EU-US air agreement is, of course, very important. For this reason, Parliament and our committee have played a very active role in the discussions and the visits.

Around 60% of world air traffic is between America and Europe, which gives an indication of its importance. We hope that both partners are therefore aware of the need for a genuine bilateral agreement and that they will be encouraged in future to improve the current state of affairs even further. Although I respect the work that has been done and although I have much admiration for the waves of optimism emanating from the negotiators at the end of the talks, I am personally of the opinion, together with the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), that there are still some areas in need of negotiation and that the current results are not as satisfactory as we might have hoped.

There are a few outstanding issues. One of these is capital interest and we had hoped that things would have moved forward in this area. However, in all honesty there has hardly been any progress, apart from the fact that a willingness to discuss the subject has been mentioned. Secondly, we wanted to see progress with regard to the technical monitoring centres, which is in our joint interest. We did not see any evidence of it. As far as market access is concerned, we hardly dare to talk about cabotage, because this subject seems to have almost become a taboo in the USA. However, I would say that whatever we offer the other party in a positive bilateral agreement, we must also be able to enjoy ourselves. This is not yet quite the case. Therefore, I am still of the opinion that, apart from one point, which we must not underestimate and that is the social aspect, not much concrete progress has been made, but there is a great deal of willingness to make progress in future.

For this reason, we can perhaps summarise Parliament's attitude in three points. The first is that agreements of this kind need a legal basis. Particularly where the exchange of data and information is concerned, we must follow data protection legislation. Parliament must, on no account, be presented with a *fait accompli*. Secondly, we must emphasise the bilateral nature of these agreements. They are not unilateral, but genuine bilateral agreements. Thirdly, it is also important for us to set a date for starting further negotiations. The result of this is that we will be doing something in this area as early as October/November 2010. I believe that in future, we will hopefully be able to establish a true bilateral agreement in economic, environmental and social terms.

**Saïd El Khadraoui**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (NL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, when we agreed to the first stage of the air agreement back in 2007, we did so for two important reasons. Firstly, the United States had accepted the concept of the 'European carrier', meaning that, from the date of entry into force of the agreement, any European carrier could fly from any European point to any point in the United States. That was an important innovation in itself, as this had not been the case for all our carriers beforehand. Secondly, a Joint Committee had been set up, providing us with a structural framework for regular consultations with the aim of allowing convergence of the regulatory frameworks, which is, of course, necessary for the establishment of a true single transatlantic aviation market in the longer term.

Imbalances have remained in the agreement, however, as historical concessions have meant that United States carriers have greater access to the European single market than the other way round, and the access to each other's capital structure also works to the disadvantage of EU carriers. That is why the clause giving a deadline prior to the end of this year for a more comprehensive agreement was so important in keeping up the pressure and forcing the United States into concessions.

Although the result before us is a further step in the right direction, it largely preserves the existing imbalances. In particular, insufficient progress has been made on market access by European carriers in the United States and on potential European ownership of and control over United States carriers.

Therefore, despite some positive elements also cited by my fellow Member Mr Grosch – in the environmental and social fields, for example – we shall only be able to accept this agreement if we are given more than a commitment to take further steps. A kind of mechanism must be developed for making further steps forward during the next few years, including on market access and also passengers' rights, so as to establish a high level of rights – proper rights – for us all, and ensuring that there are no new concessions to our American friends in the meanwhile.

Finally, I wish to ask the Commission to keep us fully apprised of the activities within the Joint Committee and ensure that we receive all reports and invitations, just like the stakeholders do.

**Gesine Meissner**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, you have presented this existing agreement and have said that there has been significant progress.

We in Parliament take a less generous approach than you, as you have already heard. It is important that this agreement is in place, because the EU and the USA together account for about 60% of global air traffic and the USA is an important partner of ours in general terms.

The problem is simply that, in a partnership, the conditions for both partners should be roughly the same. However, it is not possible to say that the conditions are the same when the USA has a 49% share of our market and we are only allowed about a 25% share of theirs. It is clear that this represents an imbalance. A small delegation went to the USA and took part in negotiations in the spring of this year. The Americans said to us that, if we wanted greater market access, we would have to lift the limitations on night flights and change the noise restrictions. We explained that for us, this is a question of subsidiarity which has to be respected. Basically, we can only negotiate on other issues if we have a reasonably level playing field.

Four points were mentioned. The environment: we can make some joint progress via the emissions trading system, simply because we have such a large share of the world market.

Social standards: something has been achieved in this area and passengers' rights were also mentioned. Competition: this still leaves something to be desired.

As far as security is concerned, I would now like to talk about data. The American concept of data protection and privacy is different from ours. We understandably want our concept of privacy to be respected. We looked at the body scanners while we were in the USA. There, it is normal for the scanners to show an image of the entire body, with only the face being concealed. This was completely inconceivable to us. We want privacy and data to be protected in every case. This has to be respected.

We in Parliament, with our new powers from the Treaty of Lisbon, will be happy to discuss this with you.

**Jacqueline Foster**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, we would all welcome a successful conclusion to the EU-US Open Skies agreement. Indeed, after several years of negotiation, it is really rather overdue.

Obviously, this second-stage draft agreement is a significant breakthrough and is to be welcomed. I acknowledge that negotiators have made progress in the areas of security, competition and market access, but I am disappointed at the failure to resolve fully issues of foreign ownership and control and cabotage. We also support Parliament's motion for a joint resolution. However, I am concerned that specific references to ETS, EU social issues and a date deadline have been included in the text, as we do not have the authority to broaden the scope of air service agreements.

The aviation industry has suffered massively over the last decade and although there is some improvement, it is still fragile, particularly in Europe. Agreements often mean compromise, but that does not mean we want a deal at any price. It is about give and take.

So finally, I would say to the Commissioner that we want an agreement which is fair, robust and leads to full liberalisation which will benefit European carriers, consumers and our American friends.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D)**. – (RO) The European Community initiated the measures required to increase flexibility, open up the markets and ensure consistency in the civil aviation sector, based both on bilateral and multilateral relations.

With regard to the EU-US Air Transport Agreement, we should mention that a preliminary agreement was already signed on 25 March 2010. This agreement opens up the markets completely and gives a high priority to cooperation on the development of the EU and US air traffic management systems, SESAR and NextGen, in order to ensure interoperability and compatibility, as well as help reduce the environmental impact.

The EU-US agreement will be virtually one of the first agreements signed on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon. I also wish to stress that any transfers involving personal data from the EU and Member States should, for security reasons, be carried out on the basis of international agreements recognised as legislative acts and in compliance with European data protection legislation. We regret that the emissions trading system regulation is not part of the preliminary agreement. On this point, we call for additional negotiations, bearing in mind the ETS system's entry into force in 2012.

**Kristalina Georgieva**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, sincere thanks to all the speakers for the comments they have made. Despite the late hour, there is very clearly considerable interest in many of the topics. It has been quite rightly mentioned that Europe and the United States together represent close to 60% of global aviation traffic. Therefore, this agreement is very significant: not only for the citizens of Europe and the United States, but for all the passengers that take advantage of our carriers.

In addition to the face-value significance for air transport, the unparalleled business links, strong demographic and cultural ties and geographic positioning mean that the US, for Europe, is the most important strategic aviation partner. It is exactly the objective of this agreement to consolidate this strategic transatlantic partnership and to secure the gains from the First Stage Agreement guaranteeing a stable framework for future relations.

A number of speakers pointed out the need to continue this process of engagement so we can make further advances. One of the achievements of the Second Stage Agreement is indeed that it puts in place a process of engagement.

I would like to immediately reply at this point that of course, the Commission would be keenly interested in sharing our own work in the Joint Committee with Parliament, as we see a significant value in Parliament's engagement as we move forward.

By opening up more opportunities for the industry and addressing some of the regulatory challenges it faces, the agreement will play a role in helping the European aviation industry emerge from the current period, which is characterised by profound economic and operational challenges.

Let me be very clear. The Commission, like many of the speakers, agrees that the Second Stage Agreement is not perfect. It is a very important step forward but it is not a perfect or conclusive step.

Like the speakers here, the Commission would have liked to have seen an immediate and irrevocable change to the US law governing ownership and control of their airlines, but the reality is that this is not in the hands of the US Administration, with whom we negotiate. It is a legislative reform that can only be delivered with the support of the US Congress.

This leads me to a very important message to this audience: that Europe will have to use its influence to persuade the US Congress of the merits of continuous reforms. In this respect in particular, the European Parliament will have a key role to play, with the engagement and the opportunities Parliament has with Congress in relations with members of Congress. I hope that we can count on you to advance the dialogue, the discussions and, most importantly, the legislative steps needed.

On the issue that was pointed out by a couple of speakers on data protection: just for the record, this is not part of the Air Services Agreement. It is a matter of justice and home affairs and obviously a matter that is of importance, and it will be taken up seriously in the context of discussions in that field.

So let me stop here and thank the Members again for their very useful and constructive comments.

**President**. – I have received five motions for resolutions<sup>(7)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

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(7) See Minutes



The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2010.

## 18. Implementation of the first railway package directives (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the statement by the Commission on the implementation of the first railway package directives [2010/2556(RSP)].

**Kristalina Georgieva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, thank you for grounding me from air to rail now. It is my privilege to stand before Parliament to speak on this matter.

I would like to thank Parliament very much for its support for the efforts of the European Commission to control the proper implementation of the first railway package by Member States, which is their responsibility. The Commission, for its part, has complied with its obligations as guardian of the treaty by sending reasoned opinions to 22 Member States for incorrect implementation of the first package. I can assure you that the Commission will not hesitate to take Member States which are still not complying with European legislation to the Court of Justice.

While the specific legal details of the infringement procedures are a matter between the Commission and the Member States, our services have already submitted to the Committee on Transport and Tourism, earlier this year, a complete list of all infringements. We also share the regret expressed by the committee that the level of investment in rail infrastructure remains insufficient in many Member States.

However, the Commission cannot agree with the statement that it has not sufficiently focused monitoring on the financial foundations of the railway system. The directives of the first railway package only prescribe that Member States have to ensure a balanced budget for the infrastructure managers over a reasonable period of time. Where the Commission has found evidence that Member States have not respected this provision, infringement procedures have been opened.

Some interest groups want to go further and think that the Commission could oblige Member States to increase investment in the railway sector in general. We might like to see this, but there is no legal base to support it. That being said, the Commission has, on several occasions, made a political appeal to Member States because we recognise the importance of investment in rail infrastructure to promote a sustainable transport system in Europe. Not very long ago, there was a discussion on that question in this Chamber, in the context of the volcanic ash cloud and the implications it had for connectivity within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world.

I note the wish that the revisions of the first railway package should address the question of lack of resources and powers of regulatory bodies as a priority. I can assure you that the forthcoming Commission proposals will do just that. The recast of the first package will also contribute to clarifying principles of infrastructure access charging, in line with the request from Parliament.

On the independence of essential functions, the Commission has already made its position very clear in its communication of May 2006. Infrastructure managers must be independent from railway undertakings and railway holdings. A holding should not have operational control over its infrastructure subsidiary. Control and independence exclude each other: you cannot have both at the same time. Based on the case-law of the Court of Justice, we have established clear criteria for assessing the independence of an infrastructure subsidiary from the holding company. I am therefore confident that the Commission will win this argument in the forthcoming court procedures.

The resolution also calls for the application of a reciprocity principle. However, this is not a principle that we can accept in European legislation in general. Each Member State has to comply with the European directives as they stand, independently of what other Member States do. Otherwise implementation would always follow the path of the slowest Member State.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the critical view the draft resolution takes on the implementation of the first railway package by the Member States. I reassure you again that the Commission has done – and intends to continue to do – its job as guardian of the treaty.

The Commission should not be left alone in pushing for rail market opening and, ultimately, for the revitalisation of rail as a sustainable and efficient mode of transport. We count on your support to make European rail policy a full success and a contribution to getting Europe out of the present economic crisis.

**Carlo Fidanza**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I cannot deny that we have wasted too much time over the implementation of the first railway package. As you know, the three directives were adopted in 2001 and it was ordered that they should be transposed into national law by 15 March 2003.

With a view to the recasting of the first railway package, I would like to bring up not only the topic of investments, which the Commissioner rightly mentioned, but also three concepts that I believe to be essential for proper implementation of the first package: three concepts that I believe the Commission should take into consideration.

Firstly, among the various difficulties we encountered in the past few years, certain aspects emerged concerning the various legal interpretations of the independence of infrastructure managers, which require clarification. I believe, Commissioner, that we could obtain greater clarification of this matter because it was one of the obstacles we encountered over the years and I hope that we can at last achieve a single interpretation when the first package is recast.

Secondly, I am convinced that completing the liberalisation of the railway market must be seen as an absolute priority for all Member States. We are well aware that everyone is happy to say they are in favour of liberalisation but very few are prepared to put their words into action at home. For these reasons, full implementation of the first package is an essential condition for achieving this result. I therefore call on the Commission to step up its actions in this direction.

Lastly, it is now unthinkable for entities that operate under a system of absolute monopoly within their own national borders to exploit this competitive edge to the detriment of their competitors in countries that have opened up their internal markets. For this reason, in agreeing with the strategic aim of liberalisation, we believe – and we and Mr Grosch have also included this in the text of the resolution we will vote on tomorrow – that we must affirm and apply the principle of reciprocity that is now necessary pending completion of the opening up the market.

**Saïd El Khadraoui**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (NL) Mr President, Commissioner, looking at rail freight's share of the market over the last 20 years, we note that it first decreased, then stabilised somewhat at approximately 10%. Of course, a whole range of measures will have to be taken if we want to work on this. These concern not only market forces but also, among other things, technical interoperability, strengthening of the European Railway Agency, a solution for the financing of new infrastructure and the maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Efficient market forces are clearly also part of the story. The first railway package aimed to contribute to these. It was adopted in 2001 and should have been transposed by March 2003, yet seven years later we note that, in fact, 22 countries are not in compliance and have failed to transpose it sufficiently. This is unacceptable, of course, and the Commission also waited too long before giving a proper response.

There are three things that are very important. We need an independent regulatory body that has sufficient resources to impose market effectiveness and ensure that this is applied. Secondly, of course – and this has already been mentioned – there is the independence of the infrastructure manager, so as to create a level playing field for all players. Thirdly, we need to take a closer look at the level of the infrastructure charges. In that regard, we must also take a look at, and make a comparison with, the cost structure for other modes of transport, so as to establish a level playing field across all modes of transport. Yet that is an entirely different story.

As far as further liberalisation is concerned, we must now focus on freight transport and the proper implementation of the first railway package. Yet with regard to domestic passenger transport, which many wish to see liberalised, I should like to be very cautious. I would advocate bearing the following principle in mind, in particular: at all events, public services of a high standard and extensive, efficient and comfortable rail transport for all, rather than liberalisation as an end in itself.

**Gesine Meissner**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, you have now moved from air travel to rail travel, which is our second subject this evening. I must say that it is often the case in politics that fine words are followed by actions that leave a lot to be desired and that is what has happened here.

In the European Union, we have a lot of excellent objectives. We have already achieved some of them, but others we are far from fulfilling. There is still a great deal to be done with regard to the internal transport

market and rail transport in particular. We had good intentions, but we have to ask ourselves whether the European Union is a paper tiger. Or perhaps we do not have the wherewithal to get to where we want to go? In the past, competition on the rail market has been very varied. We need an independent regulatory body. This has functioned quite well for the rail system in Germany, but that does not mean that there is no room for improvement. We really need the option of dividing up the lines independently, so that everything runs smoothly and there can be real competition. That is one of the points that I wanted to make.

It is, of course, embarrassing for us that, out of the 27 Member States, only the United Kingdom, Finland and the Netherlands have implemented the directive. The two Member States which have no railway system – Malta and Cyprus – were obviously unable to do so. All the others have not done their homework and have obviously got away with it, because we have not reprimanded them. Therefore, it is important for the European Union to put in place appropriate sanction mechanisms, otherwise we will not be taken seriously. It is also important to make it clear to the Member States that everyone will benefit from this. In principle, everyone wants the rail market to be opened up to competition. That is what everyone says. However, when it comes to taking action, nothing much happens.

We must make progress on the finances. It finally became clear in Saragossa recently that there is a general lack of funding available. It could be our job to subsidise cross-border projects and we must, of course, call on the Member States to do more. We know that the situation is difficult everywhere at the moment, but this is what Europe needs.

**Michael Cramer**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, ladies and gentlemen, the first rail package was due to be implemented in March 2003. A total of 22 Member States have so far failed to do so. The Commission did not take action until June 2008. This is why the European Parliament has issued a sharp reprimand to the 22 Member States and also to the Commission, which is the guardian of the treaties.

We need independent regulatory bodies and the separation of the rail network and the operating companies. The track access charges must be fair, just and transparent. I have an example of this from my home country, Germany. In Berlin, the access charges for the suburban railway are twice as high as in Hamburg, where they are twice as high as in the Rhine-Main region. That is not fair, nor just, nor transparent. These charges are purely arbitrary and you need to take action in this area. The networks must be opened up and a reciprocal approach is needed. It must not be the case that rail companies are protected from competition at home, but take part in competition in other countries. As the guardian of the treaties, the Commission must apply the relevant legislation.

However, we not only need fair competition on the railways. We must also bring an immediate end to unfair competition in road and air transport. A toll with no upper limit is charged for every locomotive for every kilometre of track, whilst road tolls do have an upper limit, are voluntary – the Member States can decide whether to levy them or not – and apply only on motorways and only to lorries over 12 tonnes. The rail toll in Slovakia is the highest in Europe and the Slovaks have no road tolls at all. This encourages a change in the way goods are transported, but in the wrong direction.

The subsidies for air transport, which is one of the causes of climate change, are also a big problem. Emissions in the stratosphere are three or four times as harmful to the climate as those at ground level. The European Environment Agency estimates that the subsidies received by the airlines amount to more than EUR 30 billion per year. While tax has to be paid on the fuel for a diesel locomotive, there is no tax on kerosene. VAT is charged on international rail transport, but not on air transport. In the emissions trading system, the airlines are given 85% of their certificates, while the power generation companies which supply the rail industry have to purchase all of theirs.

All of this is simply crazy and the situation must change. In order to protect the climate and safeguard people's mobility, we need fair competition, not just within the rail industry, but between the different types of transport. The Commission is the guardian of the treaties and, therefore, it has a great deal to do. Once it starts to tackle the problems, it can be sure of the support of the European Parliament.

**Jacky Hénin**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (FR) Mr President, freedom of movement is an essential right for all citizens of the European Union. If this right is to be exercised in practice, it is vital that we have access to safe, high-quality, environmentally friendly transport that is affordable for all. That requires an efficient, well-linked and interconnected public rail transport service serving all regions. That means publicly owned, integrated rail companies to achieve both standardisation between regions and services and cooperation at

European level. That means we should treat passengers as citizen-users with rights and not just as customers, where the only thing that counts is the thickness of their wallets.

Unfortunately, the Commission, the Council and the majority of this Parliament have dogmatically chosen to make rail transport not an instrument of freedom, but a commodity like any other, left to the mercy of the market and of competition. We have ruined national rail companies by separating infrastructures and transport services, passengers and freight, operation and safety. We have forbidden cross-subsidisation, which allowed for standardisation across regions and services. We have taken this ridiculous approach so far that we have spent millions of euro so that locomotives, which were previously able to pull freight trains and passenger trains, can no longer pull both.

The outcome is damning: a deterioration in the quality of service and an increase in prices for users, line closures, infrastructures that are falling apart, and, above all, a significant decline in the level of safety. When you separate infrastructures and services, when you increasingly give a third party responsibility for safety, you take risks with the lives of users. The number of accidents, including fatal accidents, has increased in recent years. That is one of the terrible, logical consequences of your irresponsible policy.

With rail packages, instead of modernising railways in Europe and giving them the resources for their ambitions, we have disorganised this means of transport in order to launch it into foolish competition with air transport, and unfair and unequal competition with road transport, to the detriment of the coherence of networks and the development of local services. Thanks to your package, with the exception of the high-speed lines, we are now moving slower on French rail networks than we were a hundred years ago. We were promised that competition would bring prices down, but the complete opposite is true. As in the energy sector, competition is causing a sharp increase in prices for users.

I will give you one last example by way of conclusion. SNCF, France's main consumer of electricity, used to purchase its energy from EDF at a specific tariff. However, in order to introduce rail competition, the Commission is forcing France to legislate so that, in June 2011, SNCF's electricity bill will be 25% higher. Thank you Commission, thank you competition. In the midst of the crisis, job seekers and families will pay much more for their train tickets.

**Antonio Cancian (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I believe we have been talking about recasting this railway package for nearly 20 years and I believe this is really not setting a good example.

Yesterday, Parliament approved a European railway network for competitive freight with the aim of improving traffic along the main European corridors. Free movement must be guaranteed by dismantling all types of physical and also administrative barriers. We absolutely must also free up the market as far as barriers are concerned, as far as simplifying procedures is concerned, and as far as true market reciprocity is concerned. This word has cropped up in many of the speeches made earlier today.

I believe that separating infrastructure from management and investments through a public-private system is a good thing. I imagine that all this can happen transparently in a free market and these actions can enable everyone to reach the point where they can enter the market we so badly need today.

In these times of economic and financial difficulty, I believe above all that, in terms of investments, Europe would do well to allocate and set up special funds to attract and encourage the private sector to invest and make up for lost time. All of this would naturally have to be done while ensuring safety, protection and safeguarding the environment. These aspects must absolutely be safeguarded. It is now time, however, for the Commission to give us some clear answers to our questions.

**Brian Simpson (S&D).** – Mr President, Members will recall a previous debate in this Chamber in which I, as chairman of the Committee on Transport, highlighted the lamentable record of Member States in implementing the first railway package. This resolution is a follow-up to that debate and proves, I hope, to the other institutions that Parliament not only expects the Member States to implement what they agreed to back in 2001, but also expects the Commission to use its legal powers to ensure that this happens.

The first Railways Directive, as Mr Fidanza said, should have been transposed by Member States in March 2003. The fact that 22 states have failed to do this shows a lamentable effort on the part of the Member States and, despite what the Commission says, a pretty poor and slow effort at protecting EU law by the Commission. This failure reminds us of the many obstacles that still remain when attempting to revitalise Europe's rail sector and the rhetoric that often emanates from both inside and outside the rail industry.

Indeed, this very week, we have seen one country and its major rail company lobbying hard against Mr Marinescu's report. Thankfully, they failed miserably, but yet again it highlights to us that certain rail companies and certain Member States are more concerned with self-interest rather than European interests.

I believe the Transport Committee is running out of patience with the lack of progress on this dossier. This lack of progress is slowly strangling the ability of European railways to compete effectively and the long list of infringement proceedings taken out against Member States simply serves to reinforce the urgency of taking action. We need a true European perspective for our railway network and this can only be achieved if all the different actors are fully committed to that goal.

We expect the Council to deliver on their agreements, and we expect the Commission to ensure that they do. The Commissioner has given us some assurances tonight, but it is action that we want to see. Today is Mr Cramer's birthday, and I hope that we can deliver this package in his and all of our lifetimes!

**Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Mr President, railways are a typical example of how popular public wealth has been sold off and handed to the monopolies.

The slowdown in the application of privatisation to the railways and in completing the first phase of liberalisation in most countries of the European Union is the result of labour, grassroots fights and of worsening imperialist infighting as to which of the monopolies will get the biggest slice of rail transport.

Developments in rail transport in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Greece and other Member States of the European Union confirm our assessment. The Greek railways are cutting back their timetables in the name of restructuring and within the framework of the undertakings made in the memorandum between the PASOK government, the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, taking away the right of travel from inhabitants and the right to transport goods to numerous areas of Greece and downgrading the potential for growth in Greece.

The over-indebtedness of the Hellenic Railways was caused by the anti-grassroots policy of the European Union and the PASOK and New Democracy governments, the degeneration in the public character of the railways and their conversion to a paradise of private contracting interests, a golden goose to increase the profits of the monopoly business groups which plundered the Hellenic Railways.

Today, the PASOK government is preparing to sell off the Hellenic Railways, piece by piece, to hand over its lands in Thriasio and other infrastructures in the ports of Elefsina, Piraeus and Thessaloniki and to subsidise companies for the railway lines, by applying the EU policy of privatisation and the undertakings made in the memorandum.

Big business is treating the crisis as a new opportunity to safeguard and increase its profits, by stepping up the exploitation of the workers and of natural resources, and to sell off popular public property.

Selling off the Hellenic Railways includes a package of state subsidies for large business groups and will result in an increase in accidents, mass redundancies and sweeping changes to the labour, insurance and pension rights of the workers.

Transport, all infrastructures and other strategic sectors of the economy must be popular property and must operate for the benefit of the working and grassroots classes.

**Georges Bach (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, this resolution calls on the Commission to make a greater effort to implement the goal of one of the European regulations for rail transport; the creation of a deregulated, cross-border, Europe-wide rail market. However, I would like to say at this point that the cause of the failure to implement the existing directive is not only the lack of political will in the Member States, but also the legal ambiguities.

For example, some countries have found national solutions for their infrastructure managers which do not present an obstacle to the deregulation of the market and which should be taken into consideration. The infrastructure problems on the ground and, in particular, the lack of technical harmonisation between the Member States, but also the different safety systems used in the rolling stock, continue to make cross-border transport difficult.

One factor which, in my opinion, we have not paid sufficient attention to during the evaluation and the creation of the new version is the social side. We must focus on education and training, working conditions and the regulations for monitoring rail workers.

The infrastructure bottlenecks at the borders represent another serious obstacle. There is still a lot of catching up to be done in this area in order to promote cross-border transport in the long term. One specific example of this is the line from Germany to Luxembourg. Discussions have been going on for years about extending the infrastructure, but a lack of political will and the economic priorities on one side of the border are still preventing this from happening.

I would like to call on the Commission to put the same amount of effort into pressing ahead with the other aspects, including technical harmonisation and the extension of the infrastructure, as it does in relation to competition.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) The European Union requires an intermodal, sustainable and efficient trans-European transport system, with priority given to the development of rail transport. We call on Member States to give greater support to rail transport, including allocation of finances required to maintain and modernise the rail infrastructure and rolling stock.

The process of deregulating rail transport is under way. However, rail transport markets must not be opened up to the detriment of the quality of rail transport services. Rail transport safety and respect for passengers' rights are vital for this form of transport to gain a larger share of the land transport market.

Human resources are essential to meeting this requirement. This is why I call on the Commission to consider, during the next railway package review, including social clauses which will provide sound European standards for working conditions to ensure that the social security schemes currently operating at national level in Member States are implemented by all operators and infrastructure administrators in the rail sector.

**Jaroslav Paška (EFD).** – (SK) We are debating the implementation of the first railway package in the countries of the European Union. We can state that, although the directive setting out the rules for railway transport was supposed to have been implemented in 2003, it has still not been incorporated into national legislation in 22 countries.

Commissioner, would it not be sensible to consider whether the rules introduced by the first railway package are good ones, given that most Member States refuse to apply them? Would it not be a good idea for the transport ministers of the Member States to meet on this topic, in order to understand the reasons for the situation? In a pragmatic discussion of this kind, we might perhaps succeed in making progress over the issue of implementing the first railway package, in the interests of improving rail transport conditions throughout Europe.

**Kristalina Georgieva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I would like to thank the Parliament again for this very useful engagement on an issue which is actually quite emotional from time to time, because we all want to see an integrated European railway system in our lifetime. Hopefully, we will all live long enough to do so.

In the past, I was engaged in the restructuring of railways in two countries that are now EU Member States. I know how very difficult it is to move forward a system that has long traditions and an enormous amount of vested interests surrounding it, yet I think we all need to persevere because an integrated and highly efficient railway system is absolutely essential for the well-being of Europeans and also for the competitiveness of our region.

We, in the Commission, take your comments very seriously and we will continue to work to move forward on the initiatives that require success in this area. I do not think it is a paper tiger if we judge by the number of infringement procedures.

Why has it taken so long? It has taken so long because there has been a process of engagement with Member States. There was also an enlargement that brought new elements into the system and there has been an attempt by the Commission to make this engagement meaningful – in other words, to send serious questionnaires, to analyse the responses carefully and then to follow up with Member States. So the result has legs, and bites!

Infringement procedures are not an objective in itself. What we are aiming at is a well-functioning railway market able to provide more numerous, safer, consumer-oriented services to our citizens and our undertakings. With this in mind, the recast of the first railway package will be designed to simplify and clarify the existing provisions with a view to facilitating their implementation, but also to modernise them.

I would like to make two points in response to comments and questions put to us. One is on the level of safety. The data is categorical that the level of safety has actually increased since the market was opened but, since we are talking about people's lives, even if we have one accident it is one too many, so obviously we need to strive to increase this level of safety.

Since, in two comments, a question was posed regarding the imposition of public service obligations, I would like to clarify that the first package is not an obstacle to that. These obligations are regulated under separate legislation and therefore pursuing them is a possibility.

Many Members spoke about strategy and directions. I will share with the Parliament our three main priorities – and they reflect many of the comments that have already been made. Firstly, improving market access conditions and making them more transparent and non-discriminatory, secondly, establishing a regulatory framework, fostering both public and private investments in the rail sector and, thirdly – something that many of you spoke about – reinforcing the regulatory supervision of the rail market to ensure fair competition between the operators and, ultimately, lower costs for those who use the service.

The Commission will engage the Ministers in dialogue on these matters, in the permanent form of Ministers of Transport. The rail sector has been a focus of attention and we will make sure that it remains so and actually expands its presence on their agenda. We will soon adopt the recast proposal so it may be tabled in Parliament by September and we look forward to a very fruitful cooperation with you on the forthcoming legislative process, and certainly to visible and tangible results within our lifetime.

**President.** – I received one motion for a resolution<sup>(8)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2010.

**Artur Zasada (PPE), in writing.** – (PL) In the context of today's debate, it should be noted that in different Member States, the railways operate under different conditions. The first railway package was adopted in 2001, and it can be assumed that it was prepared mainly with respect to the situation in the rail markets in the EU-15 countries. However, the situation of the railways in the new Member States was and is very different – especially in the context of what is called 'financial architecture', which means appropriate funding for infrastructure, multiannual agreements between the state and the infrastructure manager, historical debts and funding for public services. As a priority, it is necessary to ensure that railways have equal conditions of operation and to enforce legislation on adequate funding of the railway system, because this is of fundamental significance for the development of this branch of the transport industry.

## **19. Floods in Central European countries, in particular Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the statement by the Commission on the floods in Central European countries, in particular Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary [2010/2713(RSP)].

**Kristalina Georgieva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, indeed, the floods in Central Europe are a very dramatic reminder of our vulnerability to natural disasters, and actually, as we speak in this Chamber tonight, flash floods in the South of France have so far taken the lives of 19 people. So disasters are not confined to the areas which are this evening's subject matter (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary). Floods this year have also been hitting hard in the country where we are meeting tonight.

We are all aware that natural disasters are on the rise as climate change leads to more extreme weather events, and when faced with disasters of this magnitude, the national capacity to respond is simply overwhelmed. In such cases, European solidarity makes a difference in saving and protecting both lives and critical infrastructure. These floods we are discussing this evening have underlined the added value of a coordinated EU response.

Let me take us back to the beginning of the floods in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Very heavy rainfall and severe flooding affected the basins of the Vistula, Oder and Warta rivers in the first

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<sup>(8)</sup> See Minutes

half of May. On Thursday, 19 May, Poland asked for assistance – specifically they asked for high-capacity pumps – through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which I am responsible for. The EU response to this request was swift and generous, with eight Member States providing exactly what was needed – Germany, the Czech Republic, France, Denmark, and the Netherlands delivered within hours high-capacity pumps and technical expertise. An EU cofinanced multinational module developed by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania under the Preparatory Action for an EU Rapid Response Capability, which this Parliament promoted, was also deployed. In total, over 55 pumps, 22 expert teams and 300 rescuers were deployed plus one liaison officer from the Monitoring and Information Centre in the Commission.

Six days later, Hungary, which had also been hit by severe flooding, requested sand bags to reinforce its flood containment capacity. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism managed to secure more than three million sand bags from Slovenia, Romania, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Norway, Slovakia and Croatia.

As we speak, floods and their consequences have not yet abated. Rains continue to affect part of Central Europe. A flash flood hit France yesterday and today. We are waiting for a second-wave flood to affect the south of Poland, where nine European teams are still on the ground. The situation in Hungary is gradually improving. We are in daily contact with the Member States, monitoring the situation constantly and ready, upon request, to mobilise extra EU expertise.

Beyond these emergency measures, the EU Solidarity Fund could also be mobilised to cover certain expenditures linked to repairs and recovery, and the Commission is already cooperating with the affected countries, giving them guidance in preparing applications.

The floods have proven the value of the Civil Protection Mechanism as a platform for real-time information dissemination and response coordination. This mechanism, as you recall, was also triggered for Haiti and for the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and clearly shows the potential of this instrument.

By the end of this year, the Commission will adopt a communication on the reinforcement of the EU's disaster response capacity. It will look at the response to various types of disasters within the EU as well as outside the EU.

One key issue will be improving the mobilisation of the EU's in-kind assistance. Most – not all – but most of this assistance is already channelled through the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC). The system ensures that real needs are being met and that duplication is avoided. But it is based on *ad hoc* offers, and because of this, it is simply not possible to guarantee that the right assistance will be available. So disaster hits and we pray that it won't hit in so many Member States that we will be faced with an inability to meet demands.

We propose to address this by developing reference scenarios for major types of disasters so that we can anticipate the type of help that will be needed, and by mapping out the available assets in the Member States for use when disaster strikes. And we will aim to find agreement with Member States on a voluntary pool of key assets that can be put on stand-by for immediate deployment.

To develop these ideas, we are engaging in a wide-ranging consultation and we will continue to do so with the Parliament, Member States and other stakeholders.

The recent floods are also a reminder that the EU and its Member States need to step up work on disaster prevention. This is a good moment for the affected countries to reinforce their knowledge of flood risks, to draw up risk assessments and maps, to prepare flood risk management plans, and to take all the steps necessary for effective implementation of the Floods Directive.

The increased frequency and intensity of disasters in Europe should also provide a further incentive for Member States to invest in preparedness and build up their capacity. EU solidarity has to go hand in hand with national responsibility, and preparedness will be part of the proposals the Commission will put forward.

So let me conclude, Mr President, by saying that we all recognise that emergency situations have massive human, economic and environmental costs. With the frequency and intensity of disasters on the rise, European citizens expect us to be effective in addressing them both inside and outside the EU.

We have identified disaster management as a priority, and I am personally committed to bringing forward proposals to strengthen the European disaster response capacity.



I would like to thank Parliament for its interest and support. You have been a very strong factor in developing the capacities I reported on, and I do hope you will continue to play this critical role of driving us towards a better response capacity in the future.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (PL) Flooding has occurred twice in Europe this year. The first wave came in the middle of May, the second at the beginning of June. This affected the following countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Austria, as well as Germany to a certain extent and even Ukraine and Serbia. We have heard from Mrs Georgieva, today, about the floods in France.

The flood in Poland was one of the biggest ever. The flood was at its height for a long time, lasting for as many as several days along Poland's two largest rivers, the Vistula and the Oder. Most regions in the country were affected. Important infrastructure was destroyed, including a number of water and sewerage facilities, and many public buildings, including schools and hospitals, were flooded. Many thousands of families suffered huge losses. They were given help by different public services and by private individuals. We also received help from abroad from many EU Member States and other countries. We would like to express our thanks for this.

Central and local government authorities in Poland are giving help. Estimation of the damage has begun. Financial assistance from the European Union is important and expected.

(Applause)

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (PL) Mr President, the recent floods in Central Europe and the current flooding in France show the enormous power of nature and the unpredictability of natural catastrophes. The resolution of the European Parliament, which expresses empathy and solidarity with the victims of the floods and all those who have suffered, above all obliges the European Commission to make a swift and efficient transfer of aid as part of the Solidarity Fund. The resolution also calls attention to legal measures which are essential to limit the adverse effects of flooding in the future. Put simply, we are talking about correct implementation of the Floods Directive, which obliges Member States to create a system of flood risk management with an initial risk assessment and specification of areas where there is a high or medium probability of flooding. Member States are obliged, under the directive, to prepare flood hazard maps and to establish flood risk management plans.

With reference to the situation in Poland, I would like to point out that before this year's flood, non-governmental organisations which are concerned with the natural environment had repeatedly drawn attention to the incorrect implementation of the Floods Directive in Polish law and, in particular, to the lack of a suitable system for making an inventory of areas at risk from flooding and the unclear legal status of these areas. Therefore, taking the opportunity of this resolution, I would like to draw the attention of the European Commission to the necessity, too, of effective enforcement of Union law in the area of flooding, so that in the future, Poland and other EU countries will not have to apply for EU funds from the Solidarity Fund.

**Fiona Hall**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, may I join previous speakers in expressing sympathy for all those who have suffered in recent floods, including today here in France.

Such natural disasters have become all too frequent in recent years. In September 2008, heavy flooding hit north-east England, with the towns of Morpeth and Rothbury particularly badly hit. The floodwaters receded after a few hours, but the damage took many months to repair and cost millions of pounds.

Surely these floods are a wake-up call, a reminder that the cost of dealing with the consequences of climate change is far higher than the cost of getting global warming under control, as Nicholas Stern and others have pointed out.

I am very concerned that this basic fact is being overlooked. We hear some industry voices complaining about the cost of cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, so it is very important to publicise the message of this debate: that flooding is hugely damaging to communities and to the economy.

There is only one way to stop a costly increase in natural disasters, and that is to follow the road map to our emission reduction targets for 2020 and 2050.

**Bas Eickhout**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, our thoughts are with the victims of all the floods in Central Europe, and also of today's flooding in France. These floods are a further painful demonstration of the force that rivers can unleash on us.

We want to prevent flooding, and so we must mainly look to the future. How can this be prevented? We also know that climate change has meant rivers are increasingly often having to cope with more water in a shorter space of time. This means we must greatly intensify our investigations into ways of giving our rivers breathing space and of preventing this kind of disaster in Europe. After all, prevention is better than cure.

Europe has a truly major role to play in this. First of all, there must be much more cross-border cooperation between countries. If one country does something to its river area and another does not, this will get us nowhere. We need cooperation between countries in tackling rivers. Secondly, the EU must also make responsible use of its own funds in future. EU Structural Funds are still being used too often for projects that only increase the risk of flooding. We must ensure that future EU projects we are paying for do not increase this kind of risk. This is an important task.

Finally, the EU must also look into how better to use the natural buffering capacity of rivers to prevent these floods. Concrete and more concrete only increases the risk of even more flooding. So, then, we need breathing space for rivers, and we need to make use of their natural buffering capacity. This is the only way to prevent flooding in future. Indeed, it must be our primary objective for the future. As I say, prevention is better than cure.

**Tomasz Piotr Poręba**, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (PL) The disastrous flooding which, in recent weeks, has hit Poland and other countries in the region, including Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, has caused unimaginable damage to industrial, public and civil infrastructure, and has deprived thousands of people of everything they owned. In the Podkarpacie region, I saw with my own eyes how two successive floods, which were huge and of a size never experienced there before, swept away the property of the residents of many of the villages and towns in the region. The flood affected Gorzyce, Tarnobrzeg, Jasło, the Mielecki district, and then the Małopolskie, Lubelskie and Świętokrzyskie Provinces, Mazowsze, Central Poland and Warsaw – in all these areas, the flood caused brutal and tragic devastation.

Therefore, today, in the European Parliament, I call on the European Union and the European Commission to put all possible technical and financial measures in place as quickly as possible, to help Poland and other countries of the region which have been hit by this tragic flood to deal with its effects. I am thinking particularly, here, of the release of funds from the European Solidarity Fund, which was established precisely for the purpose of assisting Member States in the case of cataclysms of this kind.

In view of the enormity of the tragedy which has hit Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, we know that without this European solidarity, and without European Union aid, it will be very difficult for us to restore normal life in the areas affected by the floods. Therefore, I would like to express my thanks for what has already been done – for technical assistance, human assistance and the expressions of sympathy which have reached Poland. Please make this just the beginning, take further action and show further support for our country, for Poland, and for the other countries, so that we do not feel left to our own devices in clearing up the tragic effects of this great and terrible flood.

(Applause)

**Jaroslav Paška**, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – (SK) During May and early June 2010, exceptionally adverse weather conditions caused extreme floods, which affected Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the entire Slovak Republic.

The flood situation was prefigured by April 2010, which was the warmest April since 1880 from the point of view of average global air temperature. Evaporation from the surface of the oceans and seas caused quantities of water vapour to enter the atmosphere that were excessively large for the time of year, and it was only a matter of where and when it would condense and fall to the earth in the form of rain. It happened above Central Europe, above the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. Persistent rainfall then alternated with intense storms over Slovakia for more than a month, from 12 April to 5 June 2010. The heavy rain caused a dramatic increase in water levels in all rivers in the Slovak Republic. However, the cause of the rapid rise in water levels was not just the rainfall, but also the development of a flood situation, which was significantly reinforced and accelerated by the exceptionally high saturation of the soil with water due to the protracted rains. Nature was no longer capable of retaining the water and most of the rainfall flowed on to the surface of the terrain, and not into the rivers, inundating populated areas, production sites, roads and railway lines.

Extreme values for water levels and water flows were recorded in practically all water monitoring stations, and, in exceptional cases, exceeded the flow rate for the sort of water situation which might be expected to

occur once in every 100 to 500 years. The unleashed water first overflowed the riverbeds, and then began to burst river banks, flood fields, destroy roads, sweep away bridges and undermine railway tracks. It gradually inundated the fields, swept into towns and villages and destroyed human dwellings. The tempestuous water carried off not only bridges, roads and houses, but also human lives. Not far from Košice in eastern Slovakia, an entire village was set in motion, and an 11-20 metre thick layer of sodden earth with family houses is slowly moving down a sliding surface, with almost 190 damaged houses coming closer to destruction every day. After the rains, 300 000 hectares of agricultural land remained flooded in Slovakia. It would therefore surely be appropriate in this situation to activate the Solidarity Fund to pay for flood damage and expenditure. The provisional estimate for overall damage in Slovakia is in excess of EUR 260 million.

**Csanád Szegedi (NI).** – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, please allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate László Tótkés on his election. It is a great joy for every Hungarian, regardless of party affiliation, that our Hungarian brother from Transylvania can hold this very important position in the European Parliament. In recent weeks, vast territories in Central Europe were affected by devastating floods. It is particularly tragic that this natural disaster, which hit several countries, has also claimed human lives. In Hungary, there are still settled areas under water today. The situation is further complicated in Hungary by the fact that the floods caused the greatest damage in the poorest counties.

On behalf of Jobbik, I would like once again to thank all those who took part in flood defence. I come from Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, and was able to gather personal experiences of the disaster. Two important lessons have been learned as regards flood defence. First, that apart from fire fighters, the organisation of State institutions was lamentable. The positive experience, however, was the joint effort of citizens and the organisation of the Hungarian National Guard. It is thanks to the Hungarian Guard that there was not still greater damage in Hungary. I would like to use this occasion to thank National Guard members on behalf of the entire European Parliament here in Strasbourg.

The European Union must offer assistance as soon as possible, while also monitoring the use of the funds. There is a risk of some people trying to use the money from the Solidarity Fund unlawfully. Support must not be given to those people, the majority of whom are of Roma origin, who did not participate in the flood defences but instead abandoned their houses in the hope of obtaining various sources of aid, trusting that in the course of reconstruction, they will be able to move into new houses free of charge.

To date, Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary, has provided some 10 million forints in aid to those in need, ensuring that we do not abandon people. They can continue to count on Jobbik in the future as well.

**President.** – The following item is the order of the registered speakers. I wish to express my solidarity with both Hungarian and Roma flood victims and, as the first speaker from the countries affected by the floods, I invite Mr Tamás Deutsch to take the floor.

**Tamás Deutsch (PPE).** – (HU) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me first to speak on something other than the topic at hand. If, some twenty years ago, someone would have told me that Bishop László Tótkés would, as vice-president of the European Parliament, be giving the floor to Tamás Deutsch, Member of the European Parliament, I would have listened with incredulity, and yet the ways of fate and the Creator are inscrutable. It is with a grateful heart that I reflect on the opportunity to work with the President here in the European Parliament.

I welcome you as vice-president of the European Parliament, and as someone who, along with Jerzy Buzek, is a hallmark of two very important European values: action against dictatorships that violate human dignity and loyalty to our shared Christian European values. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me also to express my solidarity with the victims of the disastrous floods in Central Europe and, of course, with the victims of the natural disasters in France.

At the same time, a word of thanks is also in order. Our thanks go to all those who took part in flood defence personally and to all those of our fellow European citizens who mobilised their own personal resources and helped the defence efforts with voluntary offers and are now helping with rehabilitation. It was thanks to a particular situation, or rather, since the term thanks is obviously inaccurate here, it was due to a particular situation that we had floods in Hungary, as in our case, it was mainly smaller streams and rivers that burst their banks, which had never before caused such a disaster. This also goes to show that traditional flood defence methods are no longer adequate.

I would like to express my appreciation to the European Commission for mobilising the European institutions for flood protection so rapidly and effectively. I wish to express my hope that following the European

Parliament's example, the European Commission will also make rapid and effective decisions on the financial aid required to assist rehabilitation.

**Adam Gierek (S&D).** – (PL) Mr President, the risk of flooding can be minimised, and it is lower when movements of water are precisely simulated and monitored. The natural disaster in Poland began with local flooding caused by a lack of storm drains and low retention, and was followed by large-scale floods. Storage reservoirs and modern embankments reduce the probability of flooding and are essential, but the exclusively market-oriented neoliberal policy of a cheap state, low budget and low taxes delays expensive hydrotechnical investments.

The large river at the centre of Europe – the Vistula – is an unspoiled river, which can please only the ecologists, but it is a shameful affair for my country. Implementation of the Vistula Programme, which was begun in the 1970s and whose objective was to civilise this beautiful river, was abandoned for political reasons. The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland and their successors were accused of gigantomania, but now we have gigantic losses and misfortune. Modern investment based on cohesion funds is essential.

**Sergej Kozlík (ALDE).** – (SK) Various parts of Europe have repeatedly been overwhelmed by natural disasters in the form of floods. There have recently been floods again in Central Europe, in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. They have caused immense damage, which requires the involvement of funding from the European Union's Solidarity Fund.

However, destructive floods have affected a far wider area of Europe. It seems that, despite measures for the more flexible and responsive provision of assistance, Europe must reassess its priorities as far the paying out of shared European resources is concerned. The implementation of common investments aimed at flood prevention, investments for securing sufficient water for supplies of drinking water, and also for the purposes of irrigation and producing electricity, must become a programme priority for infrastructure construction at the level of Member States and the EU as a whole.

**Elisabeth Schroedter (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, congratulations on your new position.

The statistics on the damage caused by the floods do not measure the human suffering of those affected. Many people in Eastern Europe and today in France have lost everything that they have worked for throughout their entire lives. They are faced with ruin. Many have even lost friends or relatives. These experiences are too painful to be constantly repeated. From the perspective of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, there is only one response to this problem and my colleague, Mr Eickhout, has already mentioned this. Let the rivers take up the space they need and reach a natural depth. For the River Oder, for example, this means that expansion plans must be stopped on the Polish and the German side of the border. This means that we must ensure not only that dams are built, but also that there is enough space on the flood plains, so that prevention remains the decisive word. This is the only reason why we are voting in favour of this resolution, because our negotiations have brought about an increased emphasis on prevention in the text.

However, there are obvious weak points. There is no mention of the fight against climate change in this resolution. When we look at the Regions 2020 study, it becomes clear that in future, 150 million people will have to leave their homes, unless we do something about climate change now. For this reason, we must put climate change at the heart of future European regional policy with the aim of preventing flood disasters.

**Oldřich Vlasák (ECR).** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, the flood problem is, without doubt, the most serious topic we are tackling this week here in Strasbourg. For our fellow citizens, the floods are becoming a recurring threat, which has real impacts on their property and, of course, on their health.

The European Union, which symbolises cohesion, support and cooperation, assists afflicted areas through the Solidarity Fund. This fund makes it possible to provide financial support to countries where estimated damage is expected to exceed EUR 3 billion, or where it amounts to more than 0.6% of a Member State's GDP. The recent floods in Central Europe have nonetheless shown that, despite the overall damage caused by the heavy rains, some countries – especially the smaller ones – are not able to meet the stipulated limits individually, and therefore cannot obtain support. As the Solidarity Fund should primarily serve to regenerate afflicted areas of Europe, there is a need to ensure greater flexibility in the submission of joint applications, which would reflect overall damage and not just the particular damage recorded in individual Member States. I would therefore like to call on the Commission in this regard to take steps to revise the relevant regulation.

**Jan Březina (PPE).** – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you as the representative of a country which has been afflicted by floods in recent weeks. Although their devastating effects have not been as bad in the Czech Republic as in neighbouring Poland, they have caused particular destruction in the Moravian regions. I am therefore pleased that, on the basis of my warning, among others, the resolution we are debating mentions not only Poland, but the entire region of Central Europe. The idea of solidarity is one of the brightest manifestations of European cooperation, and it is precisely this that I would like to appeal to now. As Europeans, we should always be prepared to join forces and help those who are in need. We have already shown that we are not indifferent to the fate of those afflicted by natural disasters: in 2002, the Solidarity Fund was set up in response to widespread flooding in the countries of Central Europe.

The fund's annual budget of about EUR 1 billion should suffice to cover this year's flood damages. However, the States affected must request European aid. In this context, I would like to mention the difficult position of the Czech Republic, arising from the fact that the flood damage calculated so far has not reached the stipulated minimum of 0.6% of GDP. The Czech Republic's only hope of obtaining a contribution from the Solidarity Fund is through the application of Article 2 paragraph 2 of the second subsection of the regulation on the Solidarity Fund, according to which contributions can also be requested, in exceptional circumstances, by a neighbouring Member State which has been affected by a natural disaster to a lesser extent. The connection between the flooding in Poland and the Czech Republic is surely obvious. After all, the rivers that have overflowed in both countries rise in the Czech Republic. There is no time to lose. The request for help from the Solidarity Fund must be submitted within a time period of 10 weeks from the occurrence of the first damage, which, in our case, means by the end of July. This is not much time, particularly in a situation where talks are continuing in the Czech Republic on the composition of the government. I would like to end by thanking the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, for visiting the affected areas in the east of my country in person.

**Joanna Senyszyn (S&D).** – (PL) Parliament has appealed to the European Commission many times for more efficient release of funds to help the victims of natural disasters.

It is time, at last, to introduce a flexible model of giving aid from the Solidarity Fund. It is essential to intensify preventive work. Structural funds should play a more important role in financing the prevention of natural disasters and managing their effects. The pool of money for this purpose must contain significant funds for scientific research, risk management, civil defence and the monitoring of hazards. The European Environment Agency should be involved in the preventative measures to a greater extent.

I sympathise with all the victims of the flood, and I would like to express sincere thanks to EU citizens for the help they have given Poland. I, too, with my friends – farmers from Puck and Reda – arranged for 22 tonnes of cereal fodder for hungry animals to be sent to areas affected by the flood in Świętokrzyskie Province. Individual help is faster and is targeted better than institutional help. It is time we learned a lesson from this.

**Zbigniew Ziobro (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, seeing the enormity of the damage caused by the flood in Poland and Central Europe (thousands of people who, in some cases, lost everything they owned; in Poland alone, over 300 000 people were flooded and 40 000 people had to be evacuated), together with a group of colleagues from the European Conservatives and Reformists, I suggested that the European Parliament do something about this terrible drama, this natural catastrophe, by debating the matter and drafting a resolution. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the approval of this initiative, including the chairs of all the parliamentary groups, because it is an expression of our solidarity with all those who have suffered, and also of solidarity with the countries which have been affected, but principally with the people who have experienced the greatest losses. Above all, our objective is to persuade the European Commission to give as much help as possible to the people and countries which are in need, and that the help should be flexible and adapted as far as is possible to the needs of individual regions. Once again, thank you very much.

**Anna Záborská (PPE).** – (SK) In this Parliament, we like to use words like 'a common Europe', 'European unity' and 'Europe for the citizens'.

Every year, we open the doors of Parliament to thousands of visitors from all Member States. Through legislation, we try to promote the ideal of Europe as a unified community of nations. However, all of these fine words and noble ideals will be so much hot air if we cannot back them up with practical deeds. The natural disaster which struck Central Europe, Germany and, since yesterday, France as well, has threatened lives and inflicted enormous damage. We now know that the people living in these towns cannot cope with the consequences of the floods on their own. They rightly expect assistance from their own governments

and solidarity from their neighbours, because they themselves would do the same in a similar situation. Man cannot command the elements. A community of people, however, who are bound together in solidarity, can cope with any natural disaster.

By adopting the resolution submitted, we will send a clear signal that Europe is not just a legal construct or an impersonal market but, first and foremost, a functioning community of nations, who help each other in need. It will be a signal that Europe has not only a head, but also a human heart.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I speak these words, it is again raining persistently in Slovakia.

**Olga Sehnalová (S&D).** – (CS) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the recent floods in Central Europe have brought enormous damage and a cost in human life. If the European Union provides assistance – as I believe it will do – it should be focused, along with national funding, not only on reconstructing destroyed infrastructure, but on the long-term objective of installing directly flood defence measures, in close cross-border coordination. All of the measures should be aimed at preventing the recurrence of such disasters, and, in the event that they do recur, at limiting their impact as far as possible. After all, similarly destructive floods are recurring in Moravia, the eastern area of the Czech Republic, 13 years after its reconstruction.

However, the floods are also an opportunity to think carefully about what kind of flood-defence measures will be the most effective, while having the least impact on the environment and local people. The floods have become a Europe-wide problem, affecting Central Europe yesterday and southern France today. It is therefore appropriate to consider a European flood defence strategy. In this debate, the EU should act as an independent moderator and adviser, helping to find the most effective solution.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR).** – (PL) In Poland, Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, the flood came in two waves. The first wave took away people's belongings, the second took their hope, but it can also be said – using the words of Ernest Hemingway: 'do not ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee' – it tolls, too, for the Germans, and it also tolls today for the French.

I would like to say very clearly: the European Union has very often helped the countries of Southern Europe which have been affected by cycles of drought – France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece. In Central and Eastern Europe, it is floods which occur periodically. Today, the European Union is taking an exam in solidarity – a solidarity which must not be just a slogan or a cliché, but must also be an instrument with specific financial content, and this is being counted on by Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Slovaks.

*(Applause)*

**Joachim Zeller (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mrs Georgieva, ladies and gentlemen, only a few days ago, we saw the shocking images on the television of huge areas of Poland and other Central European countries under the flood waters. People have died in these floods and our sympathy goes out to their relatives and friends.

Villages, towns, agricultural land and infrastructure have all been destroyed. The television pictures have already been replaced by other images, but the extensive damage now has to be slowly and laboriously repaired. These countries should have the solidarity of the other countries in the European Union behind them during the work on repairing damage on this scale. Following the flood disaster of 1997, Poland and other Central European countries have once again been hit by devastating floods. We cannot control the weather and it is in the nature of rivers to flood at certain times. However, the questions that we have to ask are whether, given that natural disasters can happen at any time, the right measures have been taken to prevent the damage caused by natural phenomena of this kind and whether, for example, sufficient attention has been paid to issues of sustainable disaster prevention during the landscape planning process.

If we are to provide aid, we must ensure firstly that it goes to those directly affected by the natural disaster in order to safeguard their livelihoods. Then it is a question of the Member States working together, because natural disasters do not stop at national borders, with coordination on a European level to do more to prevent the damage caused by disasters of this kind. The flood protection system on the River Oder, which has been built jointly by the Polish and German authorities, is a clear indication that joint prevention measures can provide real protection. However, we have still not done enough.

We do not need a European disaster prevention programme. The government of each country should take primary responsibility for protecting that country against disasters, including drawing up disaster plans. However, in the case of a disaster and when damage has been caused, the aid provided can effectively be

coordinated at a European level and the voluntary organisations which provide aid should have their expenses reimbursed quickly and without red tape. Therefore, I support Mrs Georgieva's plans, which will allow us to turn these aims into reality quickly.

**Monika Smolková (S&D).** – (SK) The floods which have affected almost all of Central Europe have been catastrophic for these countries.

In Slovakia, the worst affected area was the east of the country, where I live, and I saw with my own eyes how the water has destroyed a lifetime's work for some people. It has destroyed roads, houses, bridges, crops in the fields and, sadly, it has also taken human lives. The rainfall of an entire year fell in the course of one month. Flood defence measures were simply ineffective against such a volume of water. In the Košice municipality alone, more than 4 000 houses were under water. The small town of Kežmarok, which has 17 000 inhabitants, was almost completely inundated. People only recover from a disaster such as this with great difficulty. The water threat has not yet fully passed and there is already a risk of more.

Water purification plants remained submerged after the flood, sources of drinking water are polluted, the effects of the hot weather threaten calamity from the proliferation of mosquitoes, and many roads and bridges are still impassable. A large number of family houses have been destroyed by landslides, and are no longer habitable. Despite the solidarity shown by people and the help of the state, there is an urgent need to draw on the resources of the Solidarity Fund. The sooner we help the affected regions, the sooner we will mitigate the suffering of people living in these areas. There is also considerable room for drawing funds from the Cohesion Fund. The joint draft resolution by a group of Members offers all kinds of solutions for assistance.

**Jacek Olgiard Kurski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, it is good that we are having this debate, which was proposed by Mr Ziobro at a meeting of all Polish MEPs. It is good because what has happened in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia requires the intervention and help of the European Union. When a tragedy occurs, when there is a flood, the media shock us with images of houses and the people who have been washed out of them, tree roots sticking up into the air, tears and weeping. The cameras are there, there is sympathy, and there is even mobilisation and help. However, it is only after the flood that the real drama begins. Then, people are left alone with their misfortune. In Poland, there are places like Wilków, 90% of which is under water. There are also places like Lanckorona, where 50 houses have collapsed due to a landslide. The European Union must react when damage like this happens, when there is a drought, when there is a flood or an earthquake. If we were able to help Haiti, we must help our Member States all the more. In Poland, we say that 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. Therefore, I appeal for the maximum possible help for Poland and for all other countries which have been hit by this disaster.

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE).** – (PL) The flood is a great tragedy. People have died, infrastructure has been destroyed and tens of thousands of families have lost all their possessions. This drama has affected people in both urban and rural areas. Farmers' crops have been destroyed, their machinery and buildings have been damaged, and they have lost the things they need to do their work. They have been left with their outstanding loans, and the animals which were rescued have been left without food.

The Polish authorities, and also the authorities of the other countries affected by the flood disaster, have taken action to help, but it is important that similar action be taken by the European Union. The sooner this happens, the better will be the perception and evaluation of the EU's action.

I would like to take the opportunity to express my thanks to all governments and countries, and to our neighbours, who have helped us, and I would like to thank everyone even more sincerely for the simple personal solidarity extended to us in this tragedy.

(Applause)

**Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D).** – (SK) We are talking here this evening about tens of millions of people.

We are talking about people who, over recent weeks, have lost everything, minute by minute: their assets, their homes, everything they spent their entire lives saving for. We are also talking about farmers who have lost their land and their crops, which were the only income of their livelihoods for the entire year. All of these people are looking to our Parliament this evening, and waiting to see what decision we will take. We would also like to help them from our national budgets, but our national budgets are exhausted because we have had to deal with the full scope of the economic and financial crisis, and they are exhausted because we were committed to follow the rules of the Growth and Stability Pact. That is why they turn in hope to the European Parliament.

We are also talking here about something which no one has yet mentioned, and that is the insurance companies, the commercial insurance companies, which have repeatedly refused to insure people's homes which were situated in so-called flood zones. I would appreciate it if the insurance companies also gave more attention to this, and if we could look for a way to oblige the insurance companies to insure these people, and for the premiums not to verge on usury.

**Kinga Göncz (S&D).** – (HU) Hungary is one of the countries most severely hit by the flood. I would like, first of all, to express my thanks for the solidarity and assistance received, and to say that in Hungary, the floods and excess inland water affected mainly the poorer regions and poor families. Many of these are Roma families. Their settlements are generally less safe and located in the worst spots that are most exposed to flooding. Therefore, it is very important that we show special solidarity with them.

Several suggestions have been made as to how to send aid rapidly. I have a few suggestions in this regard. On the one hand, Member States must make decisions on increasing the resources of the Solidarity Fund and their quicker and more flexible use. The amendment to the proposal that would be of particularly great significance at the moment has been before the Council for a long time. The Spanish Presidency could be of great help to us in this matter. Moreover, it would be a good thing if Community resources could also be reallocated to this end, that is, agricultural policy sources could also be used to ensure that farmers who have suffered serious damages may also receive compensation.

**Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE).** – (HU) I wish to thank the Commission for its statement, and I agree with it. Allow me to add a few additional points. In Hungary, we can speak of the greatest flood of the past century. A great number of houses collapsed, several hundred, in fact. More than 4 000 people had to be evacuated. Many are still without shelter today. The stability of many houses still standing is also questionable. Damage control, cleaning and disinfection are currently under way. Inoculations are being given to prevent infection. Large areas of agricultural lands have been flooded in the interest of public protection. The severity and extent of the damage caused by these actions are immeasurable.

I am very pleased with the European Union's new programme, which makes early warning of natural disasters possible. I would, however, like to draw the Commissioner's attention to the fact that natural disasters are becoming increasingly frequent, and therefore stepping up disaster management is of great urgency. There is great solidarity in Hungary, but we also need European-wide collaboration, to express one of the European Union's most important principles, that of solidarity. One manifestation of this solidarity is the opening up of the Solidarity Fund.

**Ioan Enciu (S&D).** – (RO) I welcome the debate on the situation regarding the management and planning of river basins in Europe in the current context. Europe is going through a difficult period from a social and economic perspective, which means that natural disasters at these times have an increased impact on society. It is obvious that at the moment, Member States alone are unable to invest in river basin planning projects. Like the countries currently being affected by floods, Romania and Bulgaria are affected every year by floods. Only God has spared us this year.

I would like the Commission to draft, in the same way as for the Danube Strategy, an action plan to help Member States to plan internal river basins in vulnerable countries.

I would also like to ask the Commission whether it is considering allocating specially earmarked funds to planning projects for river basins for both cross-border and internal rivers, in order to prevent floods in future.

**Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR).** – (PL) Recently, Poland has been hit by two severe floods, and thousands of people have lost everything and have nowhere to live. Many areas have been flooded, with the region around Lublin suffering in particular, and a place called Wilków, which was completely under water, has become a symbol. The losses are so great and so severe that the victims were filled with hope by Mr Barroso's announcement that EU aid would be given as part of the Solidarity Fund. In order not to disappoint that trust, the European Commission should take swift and decisive action.

We hope the sum made available will not be a symbolic one. In the present situation, all barriers should be removed and steps taken immediately to make procedures more flexible, and significant resources should be sent directly to the victims of the natural disaster in the worst affected regions.

Adoption by our Parliament of the resolution will give a strong mandate to Mr Barroso to take immediate action.



(Applause)

**Angelika Werthmann (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, firstly, I would like to express my sympathy for the victims and those affected by the floods. In Austria, people are talking not just about a flood, but about the flood of the millennium in Eastern Europe. This flood has threatened the lives of thousands of people in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. The question here is about the need for immediate aid and also about education and awareness-raising, for example, to help people to do the right thing when a flood happens in order to avoid loss of life. Last but not least, there is the question of prevention and, above all, of the cause. I can only remind everyone that we all need to provide protection, while at the same time taking the environment into consideration.

**Andrzej Grzyb (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you on taking up the position of vice-president, but I would like to say something to Mrs Georgieva and the entire European Commission. The losses – human, financial and environmental – call for real European solidarity. This is a test of whether the European Union can react and respond to the needs of the citizens. This is not an empty slogan, because our second principle is the subsidiarity principle. Member States cannot cope with this situation, so they need solidarity and European subsidiarity. The Solidarity Fund can help with the rebuilding of infrastructure, reimbursement of the costs of rescue efforts and in restoration of equipment which has been damaged. However, there are also human needs. This requires a certain adjustment to be made to regional development funds and the common agricultural policy fund so that it will be possible to use these funds to help people who have suffered losses related to the flood, who have lost their possessions and often all the things they need to work, and who will not have anything to live on for the foreseeable future.

**Piotr Borys (PPE).** – (PL) Floods, as we have seen, do not recognise borders. Once again, after 13 years, floods have hit several countries in Central and Eastern Europe. I want to assure everyone that, in human terms and as far as the effectiveness of the rescue services is concerned, the Polish services, at least, did everything they could to rescue property wherever possible. In many areas, including in Lower Silesia, they passed the exam with flying colours.

I would like to talk about three things. Firstly, the administrative burden related to the Solidarity Fund should be reduced, so that help can be sent effectively to all the victims who were so tragically affected by the flood in all the countries which were hit. Second, we should make effective provision for legal instruments such as optional financial instruments which include an obligation to insure. Then, compulsory insurance would be significantly cheaper, and additional help would be available to everyone who suffered in floods today and in the future. Thirdly, in future, the Cohesion Fund should support construction of storage reservoirs and polders, because combating floods is the main problem in Europe. I think the new financial agenda should make this an absolute priority.

(Applause)

**Róża Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I would like to add my congratulations to those of my fellow Members.

I would like to thank you all on behalf of my constituents. Southern Poland, which was so terribly and heavily hit by the floods, is my constituency. I shall be pleased to take them the beautiful words of solidarity I have heard from you, today, in our late night debate. What has happened there, and the huge human misfortune, really is difficult to imagine. I have been to many of these places and have seen the people who have been left homeless and, as my fellow Members have said, without jobs, because their newly built places of work were washed away by the water. However, this has all happened, in addition, in those parts of Europe which not long ago got back on their feet, in which a new infrastructure was built with a huge amount of work, also thanks to European solidarity. Part of this has been destroyed, but what has not been destroyed is faith in European solidarity. Their will to fight has not been destroyed, either, nor has their will to improve their situation or their enterprise. These people are courageous and ready for hard work. Mrs Georgieva, let us offer them a helping hand as quickly as we can, and they will quickly and efficiently rebuild the damaged parts of the common European Union.

**Jacek Protasiewicz (PPE).** – (PL) I come from another southern region of Poland, Lower Silesia, which has been struck many times by floods in recent years.

The great flood was 13 years ago. Last year, there was a slightly smaller flood, and this year, the region has been flooded again. There is a difference, not only in the scale of the waters, the scale of the flood and the

scale of the upheaval which took place 13 years ago and this year, but also in the fact that at that time, Poland was not a member of the European Union and now it is. It is important, therefore, that the victims of this year's flood, unlike those of 13 years ago, receive help from European institutions. In these dramatic circumstances, therefore, it is truly important that EU citizens, such as the residents of Lower Silesia and other regions of Poland, see that the Union is doing something and that it helps not only industrial corporations, not only banks and not only states which have financial problems, but also ordinary people when they are in need. It does not matter whether it is Central Europe or Western Europe – as was the case with France this year – and it does not matter if it is going to be the Solidarity Fund, the Cohesion Fund or the Regional Development Fund.

The Union must be there when people need help and support.

(Applause)

**Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE).** – (SK) First and foremost, I would like to express my sympathy and fellowship with the affected regions in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, but also in Austria, Germany and, from today, also France, as well as my native Slovakia, and also to express sympathy with the families of the victims.

The floods in Central Europe have caused extensive material harm, damaging the entire infrastructure, taking the roof from over the heads of thousands of people and claiming many casualties. Yet the regulation establishing the European Union's Solidarity Fund now displays many shortcomings. The fund was originally intended for major natural disasters, and experience gained so far indicates a need to further modernise this instrument. This applies mainly to the lack of speed in the provision of funding and the transparency of the criteria. I would therefore like to call on the Commission to take into account the need for modernisation.

Since the mobilisation of resources from the Solidarity Fund is conditional on the approval of the European Parliament, I will personally argue, together with my fellow Members, for this approval to be granted as quickly as possible.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, in one of the flooded provinces alone, Małopolskie Province, the water claimed nine lives. It flooded 645 towns and villages, and over 2 000 houses are now no longer fit for use. Mountain and foothill areas suffered particularly during the flood. These areas face a daily struggle with difficulties which are the result of specific features of their terrain and their poor infrastructure. The natural disaster which hit Małopolska has aggravated problems which already existed, flooding many kilometres of roads and railway lines, sweeping away bridges and flooding schools, farms, businesses and residential buildings. As a result of the flood, over 1 000 landslides occurred in this characteristic region, which caused additional losses, in some cases, taking away entire villages.

In the face of this natural disaster, I appeal to the European Commission to take account of the specific features of individual regions affected by the flood when making funds available from the Solidarity Fund in order to give the best possible help to the victims of this upheaval.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) I wish to express my solidarity with the victims of the floods which have hit Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The Danube's waters rose to a very high level in Romania as well, threatening a number of locations with floods, including in the Danube Delta area.

Climate change is causing desertification and increasing the incidence of extreme natural phenomena such as storms, torrential rain and floods. The development of an effective system in Europe for averting and managing flood risks is an absolute must. According to the specific European directive, Member States must evaluate flood risks in river basins by 2011 and produce flood plain maps by 2013.

I call on the Commission to make sure that the plans and strategies for reducing flooding are going to mean more than just pieces of paper. I also urge the Commission to draft a common policy on inland waters which will provide an integrated approach to dealing with economic and social development in Europe's river basin regions, as well as with environmental protection, water quality and the prevention and management of flood risks.

**Kristalina Georgieva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I would like to thank all who have spoken this evening. I will be travelling to Poland next week, and many of your comments give me a much deeper understanding of what I will be looking for.

Let me take first the issue that has been brought up most frequently by all speakers. This is the ability of the Commission not only to mobilise emergency assistance and deploy teams when we are fighting a disaster, but also to alleviate the pain and suffering of people, post-disaster, by providing access to the Solidarity Fund. I would like to make two points on this.

First, what do we have today? Many of the speakers have clearly been engaged and interested in how the Solidarity Fund operates, so let me just recap what people have said so far. There is a threshold of 0.6% of GDP or at least EUR 3 billion in damages. Just by way of illustration, for Poland this is a damages threshold of EUR 2.1 billion; for Hungary it is EUR 591 million; for the Slovak Republic, EUR 378 million. Only after that threshold has been passed is there access to the fund.

The submission has to be made 10 weeks after the disaster and then, on the basis of the submission, the Solidarity Fund is triggered. As many of you have probably noticed in the past, sometimes the response period – the time it takes for money to reach the beneficiaries – while intended to be shorter, can sometimes stretch into the future. So that is the reality today.

My second point is that the Commission has made a proposal to the Council which was also strongly supported – even before these very serious floods – by Parliament. The proposal aims precisely to increase flexibility, accelerate speed, and allow local circumstances to be better factored into the response.

However, this proposal has been stuck in the Council, mostly because of financial considerations in the context of the crisis. In the Commission, we are very hopeful that the floods will flush it through, and our intention is to take into account the experience of the floods and improve the proposal further. I would certainly be very grateful to Parliament for your support. We will echo the words we have heard this evening on what you would like to see by way of solidarity. So a friend in need can be a friend indeed.

We believe that is really essential and we are very much in favour of pursuing it. We will, given the circumstances and given the messages we have heard this evening, do everything possible within the current parameters of the Solidarity Fund to pursue the delivery of assistance as expeditiously as we can. The fund is not my area of responsibility but I will work with Commissioner Hahn who, like me, is very keen to see the fund being flexible and agile so that we can deliver now but also deliver better in the future.

Secondly, comments were made – in addition to the Solidarity Fund – on being able to tap into the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. Yes, indeed the EU financial instruments can cofinance a wide range of risk management measures. They can cofinance many of the things people talked about – such as reconstruction of river beds, afforestation, allowing a natural flow of water to return, planning, and multi-country studies.

Just as an illustration of what kind of funding is currently available: for Poland, EUR 700 million are available and for the Slovak Republic, EUR 120 million. Obviously, it is very important to look into current allocation and opportunities to use these funds in a flexible manner to provide relief to those who are affected.

Thirdly, there has been quite an important discussion on the Floods Directive. It is regrettable to say that some countries that are most severely hit by the floods have not transposed it yet. There are infringement procedures open, including against Poland, and I do hope that what has happened is a wake-up call so that we will see Member States moving very prudently on the implementation of the Floods Directive. Dates have been mentioned of 2011, 2013 and 2015, where very critical deadlines have to be met.

I have heard a number of speakers raise the issue of prevention, which is really much better than cure. In our communication, which will appear at the end of this year, we will be taking this comprehensive approach of combining prevention measures with response and feedback mechanisms through rehabilitation. Without this kind of approach, I think we will be sitting in this room in the future discussing the same issues the same way we are doing tonight.

That takes me to the much broader issue, namely adaptation to climate variability and climate change. Climate change is here to stay. Honourable Members have talked about mosquitoes returning. This sounds like an impossibility. Were they not supposed to be gone? Well, with climate change, we may see the return of malaria even to the European continent. Of course, the only way to cope is to very prudently assess what the trends are and what we can do to be best prepared for those trends. Climate systems are not linear. In other words, we have to be prepared for a wide variety of scenarios and this is what in my team we would like to bring forward so that our action can be as effective as possible.

Let me raise one more point, on insurance schemes. Regions of the world that have been at risk of climate variability for longer than us in Europe – especially Latin America and the Caribbean – have invented insurance

schemes for risk mitigation that I believe are of interest to our region. As we think of advances in the financial industry in Europe, I think it is important to encourage innovation that would allow us to package risk better, reduce it and provide more assurances to those who suffer from disasters. Today, we are talking about floods. I would not be at all surprised if later in the summer, we were talking about forest fires. All those risks require us to think in a way that collectively reduces the burden of risk on those that are most exposed.

In the next months, I will certainly come to Parliament as we evolve our thinking on how we can best prepare and equip Europe to respond to disasters. I will be sure to come to Parliament often because what I have heard this evening – which incidentally relates to my country, Romania and Bulgaria are not entirely off the hook, with the Danube river being higher than it normally is at this time of the year – is a tremendous level of concern that has to translate into reciprocity of an equally high level of action.

May I just conclude, since many of the speakers have turned to you, Mr President, by congratulating you on your election, and say that I am very honoured to be the first Commissioner to stand in front of you in your new capacity.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolutions<sup>(9)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2010.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**János Áder (PPE), in writing.** – (HU) Mr President, last year, in the course of the debates on the Copenhagen climate conference, we often heard the prediction that one of the inevitable consequences of climate change would be an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events. We did not have to wait long for all this talk to turn into a reality close at hand. The countries of Central Europe have been hit by unprecedented flooding in recent weeks. Hungary has not, since time immemorial, seen floods across such extensive territories and with such intense rains, in the course of which twice – and in some areas three times – the average monthly precipitation fell on the country over four days. The problem was further aggravated by the fact that the great quantities of water came not via the major rivers but along hitherto gentle small and medium-sized streams, and along which no suitable flood protection has been built in the past years.

The enormous damage caused by the flood and the desperate struggle of local residents remind decision makers that we must urgently complete all those water protection infrastructures that are necessary to prevent similar disasters in the future. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed' goes the old saying. The Union, built on solidarity among the peoples of Europe, realises the dream of its founding fathers by offering assistance in such difficult situations to those who are in trouble. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission examine how appropriate financial tools could be used to speed up the construction of flood reservoirs and other water protection installations in these countries.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE), in writing.** – (PL) Mr President, I live near the River Warta and saw how, as the level of the river rose, the anxiety and fear of the people who live along the river rose too. That fear was made greater by reports coming from areas that had already been flooded.

Flood victims in Poland have received support and empathy from many people, organisations and institutions. They have received help, too, from abroad. My political group, Civic Platform, and our candidate for President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, have helped in the rescue effort.

Europe is already united, on the basis of its own principles, and not because of calls for unity being made by the Polish opposition. The Solidarity Fund and its mechanisms work independently of debate and politicians, and it is a very good thing that this aid mechanism is independent.

**Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE), in writing.** – (PL) Once again, Poland has been hit by a flood. Many people and households have suffered, including many from the region around Lublin, which I represent. In the next few months, our priority will be to repair the damage and the devastation which has been caused. We have to think now about how to prevent similar situations in the future.

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<sup>(9)</sup> See Minutes

We must not allow a similar wave of destruction to afflict us in the future, for the experience of recent years shows that the number of natural disasters in Europe is growing, and Poland, too, will be at particular risk of flooding. It has emerged that Poland has used only several million of the EUR 2 billion which the European Union granted us for flood protection work. We still have not prepared a plan for work of this kind.

Many Member States have not fully implemented the European Union Floods Directive. This should now be done as quickly as possible. The European Commission must be flexible in helping regions affected by the tragedy, which are now going to prepare plans for clearing up and reconstruction after the flood. It should also, in cooperation with Member States, review flood risk management plans and methods of preventing catastrophes, and it should also review the way in which EU money is granted for this purpose.

**Ádám Kósa (PPE), in writing. – (HU)** The recent floods in Central and Eastern Europe have provided further evidence that, in many cases, people's suffering is caused not by a shortage of manpower but rather by a lack of a unified logistical system or service. It must be noted that in the area of civil defence or disaster protection, the existing protocols are neither sufficient nor adequate. A protective system guaranteeing the security of citizens' lives and property must be able to handle modern information and communication tools and services. The access to information of people living with disabilities is still limited at the time of natural disasters, as was the case after the eruption of the Icelandic volcano and the resulting air traffic chaos. We need a change of perspective here. It is indispensable for all media to broadcast in ways that are accessible and unimpeded (with subtitles, accompanied by clearly visible visual information) and to help people at times of natural disasters; furthermore, mobile telephone operators should cooperate in providing their subscribers with preferably free and immediate information tailored to individual preferences and needs. These improvements can only be achieved if the European Commission takes decisive initiatives and cooperates with Member State governments to continue the development of single protocols.

**Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), in writing. – (PL)** Mr President, the floods, the painful effects of which have been felt not only in Poland, but in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, have caused huge losses. This is yet another cataclysm which has shown us how helpless we are in the face of the forces of nature, and it forces us to take swift and effective action. There are many victims who have lost their near and dear ones and all their possessions – I would ask them to accept my condolences and expressions of sympathy.

At this particularly difficult time, all forces at our disposal have been mobilised. There are numerous examples of rescue work carried out by the emergency services and by ordinary people. This difficult moment should give us food for thought and motivate us to take swift action in terms of determining precisely what else should be done in similar situations in future. It would be a good idea to organise units which would not be very expensive but which would ensure a rapid reaction in the event of danger. In addition, we should also ensure that they are able to cooperate with each other as part of the EU.

I welcome adoption of the report on the European Earth Observation Programme (GMES), which enables better monitoring of the removal of the effects of natural disasters. Crisis management will be more efficient, because all services, at national, regional and local level, will have access without charge to data collected by GMES. I would like to express my hope that despite the difficult financial situation in the EU, funds will be made available to help countries affected by the disaster.

**Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE), in writing. – (PL)** The flood in May and June which swept across Poland particularly affected Podkarpacie Province, where I live. The losses are enormous. People have been deprived of everything they owned: homes, farm buildings, agricultural land and livestock. The tragedy faced by these people cannot be put into words.

I would like to express my sympathy for my fellow Poles and, in the context of today's debate, I would like to stress the significance and the scale of the human tragedy and also to emphasise the hope that help will be forthcoming from the EU. At this difficult time, human solidarity has been evident, and I would like to thank all those people from Poland and abroad who have helped us. Our biggest priority, however, is financial aid for the affected areas to rebuild devastated infrastructure, which is why it is so important for Poland and for Poles to receive help and solidarity from the entire EU and to be able to benefit from the Solidarity Fund.

**Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), in writing. – (PL)** In recent weeks, Poland has been the victim of a flood which has claimed the lives of 20 people. Thousands of homes have been destroyed, leaving the population of flooded areas with nothing to live on and, in many cases, with no hope of a way out of this dramatic situation. After the experience of what is known as the flood of the millennium in 1997, it was hoped that improvements had been made to the protective infrastructure, which, however, proved to be insufficient. The flood has so far come in two waves, which have ruined houses and entire housing estates

and towns, but which have also caused huge losses in agriculture. It is estimated that in the south of the country, over 50% of tomato and cucumber crops have been irretrievably lost, and transport of goods through the flooded areas has become difficult or impossible, which is already causing a visible rise in food prices. According to estimates, the present situation may bring about a fall in GDP of as much as 0.2%. We all realise it is difficult to fight such a force. However, steps can be taken to counteract it. An effective system of anti-flood protection needs to be devised, in consultation with different groups, because this is a problem which concerns many sectors. We should not concentrate only on the national dimension of such measures, because floods are a phenomenon which can cross national borders. It is essential to have a supranational approach to measures for protection and warning. It is also essential to make well thought out infrastructure investments, because without effective protection and responsible spatial planning, we will not be able to withstand other floods.

**Richard Seeber (PPE), in writing.** – (DE) The current flooding in Central and Eastern Europe has caused huge amounts of damage and has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. The River Vistula had already burst its banks at the end of May. Natural disasters on a scale of this kind not only have a humanitarian and environmental impact, but also drastic economic consequences for the countries affected. The governments of the countries involved can request aid from the Member States and the EU in order to repair the damage caused by these catastrophes, under the terms of the solidarity clause in the Treaty of Lisbon. When events of this kind occur, the European Union must demonstrate the key benefit of a community based on solidarity, by providing aid rapidly, efficiently and without unnecessary red tape. The European Union's existing financial instruments, such as the Solidarity Fund, can be used to offer support for reconstruction in the affected areas. However, civil protection must remain the responsibility of the Member States, which are familiar with the special requirements of their regions and can therefore respond more quickly and appropriately.

**Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), in writing.** – Honourable Members, let me begin by expressing my gratitude and appreciation for the men and women of the search and rescue units that have been working tirelessly throughout the affected areas of Central Europe. I would also like to thank the various Member States that have offered their assistance and support during this time of need. As a Member of the European Parliament elected from one of the countries affected by devastating flooding, I strongly support the Joint Motion for Resolution on the floods in Central European countries. The recent floods have brought into clear focus the need to respond to such situations in a more proactive manner. Therefore, I agree with the resolution in calling for the creation of a new EUSF regulation capable of responding to natural disasters in a more flexible and effective manner. Just as natural disasters strike quickly and without warning, they are not limited to one geographical location. I believe we should be prepared to respond just as quickly to help those affected. The people that elected us need to know that we are there for them when they need us the most. Thank you!

## 20. Judicial training (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Commission by Klaus-Heiner Lehne, on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs, on judicial training (O-0063/2010 - B7-0306/2010).

**Luigi Berlinguer, deputising for the author.** – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we called for this oral question and a parliamentary resolution to make the Commission aware of the vital importance of fostering a common judicial culture throughout Europe as part of the Stockholm Programme.

I would like to say at the outset that this is important but also that, with a view to the communication that the Commission will have to produce on future pilot projects, as already discussed, we would like to clarify some points. First of all, we would like the parliamentary consultations to start soon so that we do not get to the initial phase, when we begin to draw up an idea for these future projects, too late when the projects have already been more or less fully formulated.

I say this because we have some basic observations to make. National judges and prosecutors in individual states are now crucial pawns in the construction of Europe because, by interpreting national rights in a European light, they can lay the ground for settling disputes and regulating the daily lives of citizens. By doing so, they engender a sense of European citizenship; they engender a European sensibility in everyone who inhabits these lands. This comes about because the people are made to feel the tangible benefits of introducing European elements and hence Community law, above all, into all State laws so that our citizens can live better lives. This offers real advantages for overcoming problems that would otherwise remain unresolved.

By saying this, my aim is to turn the whole system slightly on its head. For example, we do not agree that these projects should be along the lines of Erasmus projects because the number of judges and prosecutors involved in Erasmus-style projects would be very low. This could not be otherwise due to the high costs of physical mobility in this field and the numbers would not therefore be very significant within the judiciary as a whole.

The most important question concerns the term 'familiarisation courses', which we introduced in our paper. Judges are not schoolchildren sitting behind their desks waiting to be taught a lesson. They are mature and highly professional people with little time to spare and who cannot therefore easily move around. Despite this, they hold a valuable store of knowledge and should be stimulated to pit their knowledge against the new problems of European law and European culture. This will create fertile ground for exchanges, virtual rather than physical, using technologies, the Internet and the various opportunities such exchanges can create. Their starting point should be not so much a general approach but rather the individual cases, the individual problems that judges and prosecutors have to deal with. The cases and problems are new and must stimulate the professional growth of these legal operators, providing them with the stimulus they need to make an effective contribution, based on autobiographical reflection on their experience and what they have learned, to respond to the challenges represented by Europe in positive terms.

As you see, Mr President, Commissioner, we intend to break with the tradition of the courses that have been held so far and that we feel are not really fit for purpose. We would like to know how much and what funds are available and express our doubts over the idea – as we stated in our communication – of a Central European institution to oversee this process because we are in favour of a bottom-up movement and against centralisation.

This is a new approach. What we wish to point out, however, is that unless we shape a European mentality among judges and prosecutors, who will, in this way, offer their services to justice and the citizens who call for it, we will not make Europe. This is therefore not only an important charter for European justice; it is an important charter for the development of European unity as a whole.

**Kristalina Georgieva**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, on behalf of the Commission, I thank you for the question that has been put to us. I am very pleased to engage in dialogue on this question with the European Parliament. The Commission is working at improving access to European judicial training, not only for judges and prosecutors, but also for all other legal professions. We consider contacts with all networks and representative organisations to be of the utmost importance. Member States are also of major importance since they have the overall responsibility for training of judges, prosecutors and court staff.

The Commission is currently assessing what financial means would be necessary to implement European judicial training and exchanges on a larger scale and some proposals could be presented, or actually are going to be presented, for the new financial perspective.

In the meantime, it is important to do more and better with the available means, with what we have now. We have already taken steps to ensure that European judicial training is better taken into consideration in the 2011 financial programmes.

However, I would like to underline that, for several years, stakeholders have been encouraged to present more training projects in response to calls for proposals, but results have been disappointing: only a limited number of good quality projects on judicial training were received and the Commission regrets, in particular, that very few quality projects have been presented on training of court staff, bailiffs, notaries or legal interpreters.

The Commission services are already working on developing proof of concept projects for exchanges between legal practitioners. We are not developing any pilot project this year under Article 49(6)a of the Financial Regulation.

Feasibility studies are necessary to help the Commission define which features should be common to all legal professions and which ones should take into consideration organisational aspects specific to one particular legal profession.

To develop a common judicial culture, the Commission is keen to encourage European networks, stakeholders and Member States to organise common activities on comparative law and approximation of law, which might eventually come under the umbrella of a European Law Institute, as indicated in the Commission's Action Plan.

Contacts with stakeholders have shown that there is a need to better structure European judicial training and they have framed a number of questions that the Commission is focused on now. Questions like the following: What type of activities are we talking about when we consider European judicial training? What tools do we have to assess the impact training has at European level? How do we assess the level of quality? How can we reuse good practices, and transfer know-how? How can we allow legal practitioners to be trained not only in EU law or comparative law, but also in the skills necessary to work in a European area of justice, such as knowledge of other languages, understanding of cross-border banking and similar issues? How can we achieve a European training scheme which focuses on the needs of our citizens?

We would like to use the feedback from European judicial training activities to assess the quality of EU legislation in our ongoing efforts for better regulation.

These are some of the aspects on which the Commission is working and they will be the basis of the communication the Commission will be presenting in 2011. And in this communication, there will, of course, be a funding proposal and the Commission has a higher level of ambition with regard to funding than we currently have available. We welcome opportunities to further discuss European judicial training and will engage with Parliament on this important matter.

**Tadeusz Zwiefka**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (PL) The principle of mutual recognition, which is a fundamental one, requires mutual trust, and trust in the legal systems of other countries. These values can only come from mutual recognition and understanding, which will then give rise to a European judicial culture. Mutual acquaintance and understanding can themselves only come about as a result of activating policy to foster them, including exchange of experience, visits, sharing information, and, above all, training for lawyers and people working in the justice system – especially judges in courts of first instance – and thorough modernisation of university education programmes. In order to continue establishing a European judicial culture, an active role must be played by European networks set up in individual sectors of the judicial system.

In the context of the effectiveness of training for people working in the justice system, it is essential to emphasise the significance of the multilingual e-Justice portal. The portal should have access to legal databases and to judicial and non-judicial electronic means of appeal. It should also give access to smart systems developed as aids to citizens who are seeking ways to resolve legal problems or who are using extensive registers, lists of people working in the justice system and simple guides to the legal system of each Member State.

The European Parliament should participate fully in the development and approval of the principles of training for people working in the justice system, in particular, the pilot projects envisaged in the Commission's Action Plan pursuant to Articles 81 and 82 of the treaty.

It is also very important that the European Commission should consult Parliament on separate plans to open an institute based on existing structures and networks of cooperation, in particular, the European Judicial Training Network and the Academy of European Law. Suitable training for people working in the justice system and establishment of a European judicial culture can accelerate court proceedings in cross-border cases and, in this way, can contribute significantly to improving the function of the internal market, both for businesspeople and for citizens, and to giving citizens easier access to the justice system.

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (PL) Mr President, I am now working in my second term on the Committee on Legal Affairs of the European Parliament, and am very well aware of the importance of the subject of today's debate. Creating a European legal space, which has been our ambition for years, is not possible without suitably trained lawyers and judges. The role of national judges in ensuring that European law is observed cannot be overestimated. Let us remember that it is the national judges who are able to refer a question to the European Court of Justice requesting interpretation of EU law in cases where there is a suspicion that it has been broken at national level. It is, therefore, obvious that judges must have a perfect knowledge of EU law. It is not always like this, today. EU law, despite its formal precedence over national law, is not well known and is sometimes even seen as a necessary evil.

I fully support the proposals concerning the training of judges, which call for, among other things, strengthening of the structures which are involved in this training, namely the Academy of European Law and the European Judicial Training Network. I also think that such training should enjoy greater financial support from the Union and that this should be taken into consideration during the negotiations on the Financial Framework for 2014-2020 which are just beginning.



**Diana Wallis**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, we, the few of us left in this room from the Committee on Legal Affairs, are all very keen on the Stockholm Programme, but there is no point in us sitting in this place or in Brussels and passing new laws if our judges in the Member States do not know that law and are not proficient in interpreting it on behalf of our citizens.

Frankly, the situation at the moment is not good. We ask a lot of our national judges. They have to know their national law, their European law, we expect them to know foreign law – all the laws of our 27 Member States – to know languages, and to have a comparative knowledge of various legal systems. To achieve all that takes time – probably several lifetimes – and money.

It is going to be difficult to achieve this with our current judges, with the best will in the world. They have to find time and space to do this. We can try to do our best through various linkages, exchange programmes and continuing education. But the Member States also have to help us.

But I want to look to the future, because it is the young law students of today who will be the judges of tomorrow, and there we have to concentrate on getting the legal education of today right for the judges of the future in a European judicial space.

**Jaroslav Paška**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) The basic precondition for a well-functioning European judicial space is the principle of mutual recognition of judgments, respecting the different legal traditions and methods of the countries, operating on the basis of mutual trust between judges, people in the legal professions and citizens.

Differences between the judicial systems of the various Member States should, in no case, undermine the legal certainty of our citizens or interfere with their right to a fair and competent adjudication of their problems. It is therefore very important to create the best possible conditions for expanding European judicial training.

In the interests of better understanding of the interdependence of the European and national legal environments, the European Union must also put greater effort into creating a network of accredited institutions for the professional training of lawyers, which will be able to provide professional tuition and courses for lawyers and judges on the specifics of domestic, comparative and European law, and on their mutual connections. These investments into improving the quality of the judicial and legal environment of the European Union must be seen as essential costs for achieving the highly important common objective of increasing satisfaction and legal certainty for all our citizens.

**Cecilia Wikström (ALDE)**. – (SV) Mr President, our task is to build a Europe of the future together, based on common values, mutual trust and respect for the differences that make up our combined strength. These values cannot be legislated for, decided on or demanded. They can only be developed in reciprocal meetings between people. It is extremely important for the men and women working in the legal profession in our Member States to have the opportunity to meet, discuss and learn from each other. It is in these meetings that understanding and respect for our differences grows and knowledge can be gained that can strengthen our respective traditions.

We need to strengthen the learning and dialogue between European citizens and we will do that by creating arenas that provide the opportunity for development and growth among people who have devoted their lives to the legal systems in our Member States. Like others, I would emphasise the need for forceful action and am expecting a great deal from the Commission when it comes to bringing to the fore this important area for the common good of us all.

**Kristalina Georgieva**, *Member of the Commission*. – The points that have been made here very much align with the intention of the Commission to pursue, as much as possible, networking that would allow the profession to thrive on the skills and capabilities of the best and the brightest within it, but also to provide the platform for training at national, regional and European level in the engagement of active networks such as the Academy of European Law, the European Judicial Training Network and the European Institute of Public Administration.

Secondly, there was a very important point made on focusing on the future. This is something that the Commission very much agrees with. The question is how to implement it, as the training programmes evolve in 2011, but also with the new communication being put in place for the next financial perspective.

Thirdly, if I could just make one very specific point. It is my pleasure to inform Parliament that an EU justice portal will be launched on 16 July, because we should not wait until we have the new communication. We

should use the means available to us. After all, it is about better implementation of European law, but it is also about increasing the trust of citizens in the law so they can actually rely on the collective advancements that, in the end, have to benefit them, our citizens.

So let me stop here. Mr President, this is your first time in the Chair in your new position. You are doing extremely well. We started exactly five minutes after nine and we seem to be able to finish five minutes before the end of the session, before 12. Congratulations, and I wish you in your future chairmanship to be as organised as you have been tonight.

**President.** – I have received one motion for a resolution<sup>(10)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 17 June 2010.

## **21. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes**

## **22. Closure of the sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 23.55)*

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<sup>(10)</sup> See Minutes