

MONDAY, 5 JULY 2010

IN THE CHAIR: JERZY BUZEK

President

(The sitting was opened at 17.00)

1. Resumption of the session

President. – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on Wednesday, 23 June 2010.

2. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes

3. Statements by the President

President. – To begin with, I have several comments and items of information. As you know, Europe has, once again, been struck by a flood disaster. This time, a flood in Romania has already taken the lives of at least 25 people, and thousands of people have been forced to abandon their homes. Four European Union countries have already declared help for Romania in fighting the flood. Floods have also hit the Asturias in northern Spain, causing huge material losses there. In addition, there are reports of unusually heavy rainfall from several other European countries. We are also being told that these record atmospheric phenomena are related to climate change.

Secondly, I would like to draw your attention to the Bahá'í religious community in Iran. Last week, 50 homes belonging to members of this community were demolished. There is also a trial under way against 7 Bahá'ís in Iran. We want Iran to comply in full with international standards. In its resolutions and declarations, the European Parliament has repeatedly called for the rights of religious minorities to be respected in Iran. We have also repeatedly condemned use of the death penalty, particularly for minors. We are profoundly disturbed by information which is reaching us that in Iran, which has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there are still people awaiting execution who were minors at the time when they committed the crime of which they are accused.

Thirdly, 13 July is the 10th anniversary of the death of Jan Karski. In 1942, Jan Karski brought the supreme Allied authorities the first report of the extermination of the Jews in occupied Europe. He obtained information by getting inside the ghetto and one of the extermination camps. His was the first report of its kind during the war. After the war, Karski did not return to Europe. As a university professor in the USA, he spoke very favourably of European integration and promoted it on the American continent.

4. 2011 general budget (deadline for tabling draft amendments)

5. Signature of acts adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure: see Minutes

6. Documents received: see Minutes

7. Oral questions and written declarations (submission): see Minutes

8. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

9. Texts of agreements forwarded by the Council: see Minutes

10. Petitions: see Minutes

11. Transfers of appropriations: see Minutes

12. Action taken on Parliament's positions and resolutions: see Minutes

13. Lapsed written declarations: see Minutes

14. Order of business

President. – The final draft agenda drawn up on Thursday, 1 July 2010 by the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 137 of the Rules of Procedure has been distributed. The following amendments have been proposed:

Monday

The Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament have made a request to hold over until a subsequent part-session the debate on Mrs Gallo's report on the enforcement of intellectual property rights in the internal market.

I would now like to ask Mr Cohn-Bendit to speak on this.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (FR) Mr President, we have already discussed this issue at the Conference of Presidents. Many groups are divided over Mrs Gallo's report and it seems that all the groups need to discuss the matter further, as there are problems and contradictory points which the groups have yet to resolve. That is why we have requested that the debate on and the vote on Mrs Gallo's report be postponed until September, the second September session or a later session. The issue will need to be examined at the Conference of Presidents. The solution is, therefore, quite simple. Given that the fruit is not yet ripe, let us leave it on the vine and discuss the matter again in September.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I would like to express my group's support for Mr Cohn-Bendit's motion. Our view of the situation is exactly the same. This is a highly sensitive and very delicate subject and it certainly makes sense for it to have a broad parliamentary majority. Therefore, it would be a good idea to postpone the report and to attempt to reach a consensus in various areas where this is still possible. This is why we are supporting this motion.

Manfred Weber, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, different types of fruit take differing amounts of time to ripen. I can say on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) that our fruit is ripe for decision making and, therefore, we would like to vote on the Gallo report and come to a decision on it this week.

(Parliament agreed to the request)

Tuesday and Wednesday – No changes

Thursday

President. – The European Conservatives and Reformists have made a request to change the order of the debates on Thursday afternoon on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as follows: first Zimbabwe, next Venezuela and then North Korea.

Martin Callanan (ECR). – Mr President, I hope this is a fairly uncontroversial request. It is just simply to adjust the order slightly on Thursday afternoon in the human rights debate so that Zimbabwe comes first, then Venezuela and then North Korea. There is no attempt to imply any particular significance in any of those subjects. It is just that it is more convenient for a number of Members to take the Zimbabwe one first.

Francesco Enrico Speroni (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as my fellow Member has emphasised, it is not a matter of inserting or removing items from the order of business, but simply inverting the order of the various items to be dealt with, so I think that this proposal may easily be accepted.

President. – Does anyone wish to speak against the request? Yes, please, Mr Schulz.

Martin Schulz (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, perhaps you would allow me to ask Mr Callanan a question.

Mr Callanan, please could you tell us why it is easier for Members if we discuss Zimbabwe first and which Members would find it easier. This is an important decision-making criterion for us. I will repeat my question.

What is the specific reason for bringing the debate on Zimbabwe forward which would make it easier for you to discuss the subject?

Martin Callanan (ECR). – Mr President, Mr Schulz puts me in a very difficult position: I have absolutely no idea; I am communicating this request on behalf of a colleague, Mr Van Orden, who has been delayed, and somebody asked me if I would raise it beforehand.

(Laughter and applause)

As always, the best policy is to be honest with Mr Schulz!

(Parliament agreed to the request)

(The order of business was adopted)

15. Rights of passengers in bus and coach transport - Rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway (debate)

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

– the recommendation for second reading on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism on the common position adopted by the Council at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the rights of passengers in bus and coach transport and amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 (05218/3/2010 - C7-0077/2010 - 2008/0237(COD)) (rapporteur: Antonio Cancian) (A7-0174/2010) and

– the draft recommendation for second reading on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism on the common position adopted by the Council at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway and amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 (14849/3/2009 - C7-0076/2010 - 2008/0246(COD)) (rapporteur: Inés Ayala Sender) (A7-0177/2010).

Antonio Cancian, rapporteur. – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the issue of the rights of passengers is highly topical, as shown by the fact that in recent days, the European Commission has launched a campaign to better inform citizens of the rights they enjoy when travelling by different modes of transport. I believe that this is an important initiative and also that it is Parliament's duty to make its contribution by adopting texts which shall have a beneficial effect on the travelling conditions of passengers.

Coming to the regulation that is being discussed today, I make no attempt to hide the feeling that I have taken from this negotiation, which is that the Member States do not want this regulation. The dossier for which I have had the honour of serving as rapporteur is very delicate, since it requires a balanced solution which, while providing rights for passengers, avoids penalising businesses involved in the public road transport sector. Indeed, almost all business in the sector are of small or medium size.

The work which I have carried out over these months of negotiations therefore had two main objectives: firstly, to not hurt SMEs, small and medium-sized industrial enterprises; and secondly, to protect passengers, especially people with disabilities and reduced mobility, improving efficiency and seeking a greater sense of responsibility.

The report adopted at first reading by the European Parliament was a very courageous report – the Albertini report. The main amendments made by the Council regarded the following items: the scope of application, liability, the rights of persons with disabilities or reduced mobility, refunds and compensation for delays and cancellations, as well as other minor issues. Some of the amendments made by the Council were and are acceptable, and this was recognised during the negotiations.

Unfortunately, however, during final negotiations, we were unable to adopt the same point of view as the Council on several important aspects, in particular: the scope of application, where, given Parliament's willingness to consider excluding regional transport – even though we had proposed to exclude regional transport if integrated with urban and suburban transport – the Council refused to give any ground at all on those articles for which the exemption was applied; the timeframe for the entry into force of the regulation, which, in Parliament's view, may not exceed a period of three years which may be renewed once, whilst the Council spoke of a period of five years which may be renewed twice; assistance for persons with disabilities

and reduced mobility; the right to free accommodation in a hotel in case of interruption of a journey or, at least, and more realistically, free transport to and finding of a hotel was sufficient for us; the rights of passengers in case of delays, particularly for delayed departures; accessibility of information, an issue which is of great interest to persons with disabilities or reduced mobility, for whom we do not believe it would be acceptable to adopt a report which would only come into force 15 years from now and which would only refer to 20% of travel by bus or coach.

The negotiations carried out over these months have been conducted seriously and openly by both parties thanks to the contribution of the European Commission. In recent weeks, however, stances on the issue have hardened. For our part, we have sought compromise on all the most sensitive issues, aware of the potentially devastating effects on the companies which operate in the sector, as it would not be fair to impose further, excessively burdensome obligations upon them.

On the other hand, as I said, the other objective was – is – to protect passengers, and particularly the most vulnerable of these, for whom complete and assured access to public transport services is an indispensable means of social integration.

I have said that downgraded choices are no longer acceptable: the ageing of the European population is a phenomenon that will have important consequences and it would be an error to forget this when establishing the processes for supplying such an important service. How on earth can we possibly think that it would be an excessive obligation that travel information be available on the Internet in 2020?

I would like to thank my fellow Members who have worked with me during these negotiations and I would ask this House to vote for the text which I am proposing, so that in conciliation, we may reach a result in line with the two objectives which I have mentioned and reaffirm.

Inés Ayala Sender, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Mr President, it is now July, the month in which, even in spite of the crisis, many Europeans decide to spend their holidays on a cruise, or to travel by ship. Indeed, passenger sea travel and cruises have increased considerably and become a key factor in the development and wealth of both the European coastal area and ports and Europe's inland waterways.

The European Parliament has good news today for all entrepreneurs, workers and, of course, for passengers in this important sector, given that the agreement we have reached with the Council, with great help from the Commission, represents the establishment of a common framework for passengers' rights, which were already in place in the air and rail sectors. Thus, an unacceptable shortcoming has been resolved for a sector that is undergoing full-blown expansion and modernisation processes.

This agreement, which was reached under the Spanish Presidency – which I would especially like to thank for its efforts, along with the rest of the Permanent Representations and, of course, my fellow Members and the services of this House – substantially improves passengers' rights. This is particularly true for persons of reduced mobility, as we have been persistently asked by disabled persons' associations.

On the one hand, the scope of application has been extended, thus falling into line with Parliament's original position, that is to say, there is provision for all ships with more than 12 passengers in this regulation. However, there is room for certain flexibility with respect to small businesses that offer excursions and historical ships, and for ferries making short trips carrying truck drivers and hauliers on inland waterways, for which the immediate implementation of this first provision would be too costly.

On the other hand, Parliament has also managed to remove any mention of the possibility of refusing embarkation on the grounds of disability, merely limiting such an option to those situations which, for safety reasons, may endanger the safe transport of the person in question. The Council has also rejected the possibility of refusing embarkation on the grounds of health, an extremely controversial issue given that this was the first time a regulation for passengers referred to health.

Moreover, the time delays for which passengers have a right to compensation have also been improved, becoming 90 instead of 120 minutes; in the event of having to stay overnight, a sum of EUR 80 per night has been obtained; as regards the total of EUR 120, we have managed to double this to EUR 240; provision has now been made for obliging the haulier to bear the burden of proof in those exceptional circumstances in which he is exempt from complying with obligations, as well as the need to modify equipment in ports, etc. We have also managed to reduce the maximum ticket reimbursement threshold by having it reduced from the initial EUR 40 to EUR 24.

Likewise, it should also be pointed out that the regulation contains the necessary flexibility with respect to the peculiarities of this mode of transport, which is more prone to suffering delays due to poor weather conditions, thus explaining why certain provisions, such as those concerning financial compensation for delays or accommodation, will be excluded from the obligations in the event of rough seas.

Lastly, worthy of special mention is the fact that the agreed text obliges Member States to establish bodies which, in addition to ensuring compliance with this regulation, will be free from business interests and will have the power to set up a penalty system. Furthermore, such bodies will be able to process passenger complaints that have been dismissed in the first instance by a body that will also have to be set up by carriers.

We also managed to enable disabled persons' and passengers' associations to actively participate in this regulation. Moreover, we have managed to encourage port authorities to play an increased role in the decisions to be applied, in the sense that we have proposed that, whenever possible, the entire regulation also be applied to ports, and not only to terminals, as was the Council's intention.

I believe that we have also managed to make personnel training and related refresher courses form part of this regulation, an important achievement given that it was one of the long-standing petitions of disabled persons' associations. We have also obtained the rapid replacement of mobility equipment with an appropriate alternative should it get damaged in the course of the journey.

Lastly, we have managed to reduce the regulation's application deadline by one year.

I think, therefore, that these negotiations have been successful and would like to thank all those who have helped us to bring good news to European travellers for once.

Siim Kallas, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteurs, Mr Cancian and Ms Ayala Sender, and the shadow rapporteurs, for their hard work.

I would like to reaffirm the importance of this legislation for each and every citizen travelling in Europe, which includes every one of us here. I definitely share the view that the logic of the treatment of passengers in every mode of transport must be similar.

Central elements are: minimum rules on information for all passengers before and during their journey; assistance and compensation in the event of interruptions of journeys; measures in the event of delay; specific assistance for persons with reduced mobility; and independent national bodies for the settlement of disputes.

The Commission considers that the compromise obtained during the negotiations on maritime and inland waterways passenger rights with the Council is a good one, and the overall objectives of our proposal are duly taken into account. Let me particularly stress that Parliament has succeeded remarkably in enlarging the scope of the proposal. I want to sincerely thank the European Parliament and the Council and, in particular, the Spanish Presidency and Ms Ayala Sender, for their strenuous efforts on this file.

Concerning bus and coach passengers' rights, since the adoption of the Council common position, informal discussions between Council and the European Parliament attempted to find a compromise agreement on the text. Talks were difficult. Major controversial issues are: the scope of applications; the provisions on liability and assistance to meet the immediate practical needs of passengers in the case of accident; and provisions to favour the mobility of persons with reduced mobility and disabled persons.

The Commission has been making great efforts to facilitate the compromise deal. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find an agreement, and the Commission regrets that. A strong vote by the plenary in favour of a high level of protection for bus and coach passengers would be a good sign. Personally, I want to stay optimistic, and think that compromise in conciliation is still possible.

The Commission will strive to reach a balanced agreement in future negotiations between the EP and Council under the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies, allowing for the general objectives of the Commission's proposal to be duly taken into account.

Werner Kuhn, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, this report represents a logical conclusion. Now that Parliament has worked with the Council and the Commission to improve the rights of passengers travelling by air and rail, we should ensure that passengers travelling by sea and on inland waterways also have better rights. However, it is, of course, important that we do not compare cruise liners with traditional fishing trawlers.

Therefore, Mrs Ayala Sender and Mr Cancian, I am very pleased that we have been able to come to a compromise, so that derogations can be granted which enable claims for compensation to be made in the case of passenger ships carrying 12 people or more, but not when the crew consists of fewer than three people.

Tourism is a major economic sector and we must always ensure that its interests are taken into consideration. Both ferries that cover a distance of more than 500 metres – the provisions will no longer apply to ferries covering shorter distances – and sight-seeing tours and excursions play an important role in the tourist industry, together, especially, with historic vessels. Additional investment should not be needed in these types of boats. Instead, the crew must be able to provide assistance to disabled people.

I would like to thank everyone involved for enabling us to come to a good compromise.

Brian Simpson, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, what we have before us today are the final two pieces of the passenger rights jigsaw covering maritime and bus and coach dossiers.

I thank our rapporteurs for their work and welcome the apparent agreement reached with Council in regards to maritime transport.

However, the failure as yet to agree a formula on bus and coach travel is disappointing, but we will carry on trying in the intermediate period to have an agreement. It is on this area that I wish to concentrate today.

Clearly, it would be nonsensical and unfair to have passenger rights in other modes of transport but not buses and coaches. Therefore, an agreement or deal which does not include buses and coaches is a pretty worthless and incomplete deal.

We cannot accept the exclusion of the vast majority of bus and coach services from the scope of this regulation. We cannot accept the weakening of the rights of people with reduced mobility also in this regulation. And we cannot accept that this mode of transport is any different to any other.

Our rapporteur has done a good job in trying to find a compromise in this area. The Council have done nothing to facilitate any agreement and, as usual, have spent most of that time dragging their feet. It is interesting that, when passenger rights are on the agenda, the Council gets very negative and it is left to Parliament to carry the banner for passengers.

Parliament has a good record in defending passenger rights, despite being faced by abuse by a certain airline chief and numerous moans and groans from transport operators. At the end of the day, Parliament will not tolerate abuse of passengers by operators; it will not tolerate discrimination; it will not tolerate certain sectors being left out.

We need to support our rapporteurs so that we can go into battle with Council through conciliation with a very strong hand.

Gesine Meissner, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, as a previous speaker rightly said, it is important that passengers' rights are protected in Europe, regardless of what mode of transport they are using. It is simply a logical conclusion for us to move from air and rail transport to passengers' rights on ships, buses and coaches.

Yet another speaker has already mentioned the fact that we have unfortunately not succeeded in dealing with both subjects as a package, as we had originally planned. Although we were able to reach a compromise on the rights of passengers on ships and complete the dialogue, this was sadly not the case with bus and coach transport.

I would like to look specifically at the rights of bus and coach passengers, because I am also the shadow rapporteur in this area. I very much regret that we have not managed to achieve a compromise, because in the dialogue meeting, we were able to bring the position of the Council, on the one hand, and the positions of the European Parliament and the Commission, on the other, much closer together. We were concerned – and this is also very important – about protecting passengers' rights; above all, we wanted to ensure that people with restricted mobility and with disabilities can always make use of transport, including buses and coaches.

A range of measures are needed to make this possible and this is what we have been calling for. I believe that this is particularly important because in future, there will be more people with disabilities and restricted mobility, simply as a result of the ageing population. This is a very important point.

Of course, we must also take into account the fact that consumers' rights involve having an offering available. In particular, those small and medium-sized companies which provide coach trips are not able to do everything. For example, they cannot provide unlimited compensation. There is also the question of how they will cope with advance payments. We managed to bring our positions closer together in this area and this is why I regret the fact that we have been unable to reach an overall compromise.

As the rapporteur said, it is important that we consider both passengers' rights and the options open to transport providers. I would very much like to see some sort of agreement reached during the forthcoming mediation process, because I agree absolutely with Mr Simpson when he says that the exclusion of buses and coaches is unacceptable, given that other means of transport are covered by the regulation.

Eva Lichtenberger, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, what is this all about? Among other things, it is about establishing rights for people with restricted mobility who wish to travel by boat or by bus and about using this initiative to improve their travel opportunities at last. We have an obligation to do this. We have made a great fanfare about finally strengthening the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People within Europe and we should now be under an obligation to implement it.

On the subject of the two dossiers, I would like to say with regard to the dossier on bus and coach passengers that I am really sad and very disappointed by the Council's attitude. It is important to make one thing clear. The fact that what has been proposed here will protect the interests of small and medium-sized companies is just one small aspect of the whole thing. What concerns me is the unwillingness to tackle difficult issues. Therefore, in my opinion, what we urgently need is not transition periods of 15 to 20 years but a clear signal to people that they have the right to use the transport system.

The second dossier, which will be adopted with a large majority, concerns the rights of passengers on ships and boats. This contains a large loophole, which I would like to highlight once again. The regulation covers ships, but not ports. This means that a person in a wheelchair will have, as it were, to beam himself on board ship from his car or from the car belonging to the people who have brought him to the port. Once he is on the ship, he will have rights again, but the port itself is not governed by the regulation. I think that this is a problem that we should not be prepared to tolerate. Let us make sure that we do the job properly for people with restricted mobility.

Philip Bradbourn, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, I am limiting my remarks to the report dealing with bus and coach passengers.

We know that passenger rights is a very important subject and one in which this House has taken a great interest. The proposals before us contain a number of welcome initiatives for bus and coach passengers, especially for the disabled. But, as always with this type of report, we see a 'one size fits all' approach, in that what works for aviation and the rail sector is applied to a wholly different structure.

Some examples of this problem include how to inform passengers of their rights, and also liability levels which, in Parliament's view, could mean companies having to pay the costs, for example, of funerals before any liability has been determined. Such proposals will certainly increase the cost to the consumer.

There is also the question, which has been referred to, of exempting purely local services, which I personally support.

The very nature of bus and coach travel is very different to other sectors. Businesses operating in the sector, as has been said, are mostly small and, indeed, in some cases, one-man businesses. To impose prescriptive and costly obligations on these businesses will do nothing but force prices up or restrict the number of routes on which people can travel as it becomes uneconomic to maintain these services.

Parliament's position here is not proportionate, and in taking this position, we are likely to send this proposal into long conciliation, delaying the process not only of giving bus and coach passengers the rights they deserve, but also businesses the safeguards they need.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, given the small amount of time available, I will restrict myself to discussing the Cancian report. No one disputes the fact that people travelling on buses and coaches must have passenger rights and, therefore, consumer rights.

However, I would like to emphasise once again the problems that will result for small and medium-sized operators at the moment, in particular, in Germany. It is not possible to separate local and regional public

transport facilities in Germany, especially in rural areas, as they often jointly provide services covering a radius of around 50 km.

My second point is that small and medium-sized operators will not be able to make advance compensation payments regardless of fault. Until now, the principle of legal liability has proved its worth and has resulted in stable ticket prices.

Thirdly, I do not believe that operators should pay for delays that are not their fault, just as liability should only apply in circumstances for which operators are responsible.

Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D). – (NL) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank the rapporteurs, Mr Cancian and Mrs Ayala Sander, for their fine work and, at the same time, lament the fact that the Council appears to have failed to show enough flexibility in response to Mr Cancian's report to enable them to secure a good deal from it. As many members have already pointed out, it is important for us that we lay down a number of ground rules, at a European level, covering passengers' rights across all transport modes. In recent years, we have done a lot of work as regards air travel and rail. I think that we ought to learn from these efforts and – and this is another debate – that we must evaluate them relatively quickly and work together to look into how we can close the small number of sporadic gaps that remain.

Now, turning to passengers who travel by sea or inland waterway, as well as to bus and coach passengers: here, too, we need to apply some of the same methodology and retain the common theme. To begin with, our objective is protecting the most vulnerable passengers, for example, people with reduced mobility or those who have difficulty walking. We have to ensure that they have the same rights to travel around and go on holiday; in other words, to become completely mobile.

Secondly, I think that it is essential that passengers be informed of changes to travel schedules, delays and their rights. We need to have high quality arrangements in place for that, across all modes of transport.

Thirdly, it is clear that we also need to have arrangements for when things go wrong. Here, too, we are trying to be consistent, by guaranteeing assistance and offering meals, refreshments, alternative travel options and overnight stays, if necessary.

Obviously, some issues will occasionally require debate, like that of the scope, for example. I think that we need to arrive at a good definition of regional transport when it comes to the Cancian report so that we can eliminate any loopholes and make sure that we forge a sound piece of legislation.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, firstly, I would like to thank Mrs Ayala for all the efforts she has made as rapporteur in reaching the agreement about which we are speaking today.

The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe has maintained a positive attitude from the beginning by tabling amendments that restored those of the first reading and, after the corresponding dialogues, we have finally reached what I consider to be a good agreement.

Mrs Ayala has already thoroughly analysed all the agreements. However, I would like to highlight the reference to the scope of application, which will include all ships that carry over 12 passengers, and the lowest ticket price of EUR 6 for which passengers can be reimbursed. I must emphasise the great efforts that have been made and the improvements that this regulation is going to bring passengers in general, above all, disabled persons or those with reduced mobility.

I must also underline the reference throughout the wording to the accessible formats, in order to make transparent information available to all members of the public.

I am delighted, though it involved quite considerable work and debate, that the reference to health has been removed when it comes to refusing to sell tickets to disabled persons, or those with reduced mobility, with safety now becoming the only reason for such refusal.

It should also be pointed out that the time to provide a transport solution, or to compensate passengers, has now been reduced by a third with respect to the initial proposals: dropping from the initial 120 minutes to the 90 minutes that we have agreed in the texts. We also agree with the EUR 80 compensation. In short, this regulation will represent a greater guarantee for users.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the proposal on the rights of passengers travelling by bus and coach aims to aid and protect passengers, in particular, persons with disabilities or reduced mobility. It is the first regulation on the rights of bus and coach passengers and should

form a guarantee for such passengers, as in the rail and air transport sectors. The position at second reading aims to establish a series of rights for passengers deciding to travel by bus or coach.

I agree with the argument of the rapporteur, Mr Cancian, whom I thank for the excellent work accomplished and I believe that the scope of application of the regulation must be amended, excluding regional services when they are integrated with urban and suburban services. It would be fair and proper to guarantee the rights of passengers in case of accidents, cancellations or delayed departures, as was decided at Parliament's first reading.

Equally important is the question of information on passengers' rights. Indeed, it would be useful to supply passengers with information on connections with other modes of transport, thereby also ensuring dialogue between bus and rail passenger transport services.

Regarding persons with disabilities or reduced mobility, it is necessary to guarantee maximum protection and I would propose a 24-hour advance notice period for requesting assistance as opposed to 48 hours. I would also propose greater guarantees for compensation for and replacement of mobility equipment for people with disabilities in case of loss or damage. Furthermore, bearing in mind the needs of passengers with reduced mobility, all architectural barriers ought to be removed and existing infrastructure improved to render them accessible.

This regulation aims to improve the competitiveness of the bus and coach sector and facilitate connections between modes of transport but, above all, it aims to improve the travel conditions of passengers.

Dirk Sterckx (ALDE). – (NL) Mr President, my fellow Member, Brian Simpson, has already said that this House has always attached importance to passengers' rights and that it has stood up for them, very often in the face of opposition from the Council. On the other hand, passengers' rights are very difficult to regulate. In recent months, we have found that, in the case of air travel, regulation has not been such an easy thing to achieve.

In my opinion, we have a good agreement for maritime passengers. However, we still face the problem of bus and coach passengers. There are many small businesses operating in this sector and there is the issue of public transport, which accounts for a very large proportion of passengers. It is important that we create a clear European framework and ensure that that framework is acceptable to small businesses. Parliament is very well aware of that.

I would like to share with the rapporteur my findings for the rail sector, for the period during which I myself was rapporteur. We laid down basic rights for all rail passengers and I think that we should do the same for bus and coach passengers, as well. The Council is not in favour of this, but it should be possible. That debate has to take place. We obtained basic rights by being reasonable during the negotiations, and have possibly even secured a transitional period. I am not opposed to that. It is important that, when it comes to public transport, the European Parliament sends out a message that there is a bottom line, a level below which you cannot fall, not even if you are a public transport company, because there are passengers there, too, and they, too, are entitled to rights. Just because a public transport company might have alternative operations does not mean they do not have to ensure basic rights.

That, I think, is the stance that we need to take in the mediation. The Council will not be keen to hear that, but we, as Parliament, must stand up for this, because that is an important element if we want to encourage public transport. This is very important in the context of what we are doing for the environment and ease of mobility.

Mathieu Grosch (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, if you would allow me to, I would like to overrun a little, because two of my colleagues from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) have not taken the floor. However, this depends on you.

Moving on to the subject itself, the discussions between Parliament and the Council on passengers' rights have never been easy. This case has once again demonstrated that we can make progress in one area, but in another area, relating to buses and coaches, the situation is relatively difficult. We understand that this subject has also possibly become more complicated because the concept of regional transport is interpreted differently in different countries, for example. I live in a border area where four countries meet and these ideas actually differ so much from one country to another that it is not always easy to implement passenger rights on the same basis.

However, everyone should have the same objective, which is for passengers in all areas of transport who buy a ticket and want to travel to be able to rely on protection of their rights wherever they plan a journey. In Parliament, we have always focused in detail on the needs of people with disabilities as regards other sectors and we have recently acquired experience in this area to which the Council, too, should pay closer attention. This is not just about restricted mobility, but also about other forms of disability, which we should have taken into consideration in the past and must do so now. There are really no additional costs involved. Some problems can be solved simply by providing information in different forms and taking other similar measures.

Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, thank you for your flexibility. My turn came round a bit quicker than I had expected.

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the rapporteur, Mrs Ayala Sender, on the result achieved with regard to the report on passengers' rights when travelling by sea and inland waterway. I was the shadow rapporteur for our group, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, and, as you know, we had a substantial debate on this topic. For us, the EPP Group, passengers' rights are enormously important. After all, it is important for people to be able to count on good quality transport and also for the disabled to be able to receive good quality help and assistance.

At the same time, it is important that we examine the characteristics of this sector. There are many small companies with one or two vessels, historic vessels which cannot be converted, but which nonetheless have crews which are very helpful and offer people assistance. I am pleased that we have been able to introduce the necessary flexibility into this and that we have embedded first-rate passengers' rights within European legislation, rights which these small enterprises will be able to enforce in practice, because our sector is actually very good in that respect in many European countries. The fact that we have achieved that is therefore of vital importance and I hope that we will soon be able to achieve the same result for bus and coach passengers, too.

Santiago Fisas Ayxela (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, the Sagrada Familia, the work of the brilliant, Catalan architect, Antoni Gaudí, is a genuine icon of Barcelona throughout the world. It was declared to be a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) in 2005.

Work is currently being done on the high-speed train that will cross the city by means of a tunnel that lies a mere four metres from the foundations of the Sagrada Familia.

There are 38 technical reports opposing these works. The International Council on Monuments and Sites, a specialist Unesco body, has expressed its concern about the route. Moreover, the lower house of the Spanish Parliament adopted a motion on 22 June to ask for a precautionary suspension of the works and the setting up of a committee of experts that could propose another solution within a time limit of two months.

I would like to ask what measures the Commission is going to take to preserve a building as emblematic as is Barcelona's Sagrada Familia against the risk represented by the passing of the high-speed train?

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The two regulations concerning the rights of passengers travelling by bus and coach and of those travelling by sea and inland waterway supplement the legal framework which defines and protects passengers' rights.

Such a regulation is already in force in the air transport sector, but even with this situation, many passengers are unaware of their rights and fail to complain in cases where their rights are infringed. This is the very reason why it is absolutely essential for this kind of regulation to be available for every mode of transport.

The regulations which we are debating today establish liability in the case of a passenger's death or injury, the rights of persons with reduced mobility, compensation and assistance in the event of cancellations or delays. They also contain clear provisions for making complaints and seeking possible redress.

We welcome the agreement which has been reached for maritime transport. However, we feel that it is absolutely essential for the rights of persons with disabilities who travel by bus and coach to be defined and respected so that all citizens in society are included.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, it is very important to discuss the rights of passengers. We might also discuss the obligations of passengers, because whenever we talk about rights, we should remember that obligations and rights go hand in hand. I think that not only passengers, but also the Member States of the European Union, have certain obligations concerning the rights of passengers. In some regions, for

example, in northern Finland, Lapland, northern Sweden, Swedish Lapland and some other sparsely populated areas, it is very important to ensure that there are comprehensive bus connections or public transport connections, as movement is a fundamental right. I am thinking in particular about the ageing population. For many, their services are dozens of kilometres away.

It is therefore very important that when we talk about the rights of passengers, we also concern ourselves with the rights of those people whose basic services are a long distance away, and not always simply look at things from the angle of competition and the market. For we can also compensate nationally and thereby make regional and local bus and coach transport profitable.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) The negotiations for these two reports have been highlighted by attempts made by the Council to limit their scope and objectives, along with pressure exerted by carriers facing the effects of economic recession.

Both rapporteurs have successfully defended Parliament's firm position. Modern, good quality passenger transport is a necessity. Passengers must be guaranteed the best transport conditions and, failing this, they must receive suitable compensation.

Carriers must make the necessary efforts to provide a harmonised European transport system, both between Member States and modes of transport. The volcanic ash crisis demonstrated that the situation in this sector is still far from what passengers need.

Carriers must be aware that they need to provide quality while also guaranteeing the schedule they have announced. Passengers have to be informed about the rights they enjoy so that they can take action on a well-informed basis whenever these rights are infringed.

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD). – (EL) Mr President, I endorse the view that regulations should include the defence of the rights of passengers on all means of transport: rail, land, maritime and air.

Buses and coaches should therefore, in my opinion, be included in the regulation and particular measures should be taken in terms of compensation, so that it is rational in relation to companies and in relation to the survival of carriers.

However, I would put greater emphasis on awareness of passengers' rights and I would ask the European Parliament to start a public awareness campaign on the public's rights in connection with all forms of transport.

As my country – Greece – has been the focus of press reports on a number of episodes involving ports and transport strikes, I should like to take this opportunity to say that everything has been restored and to ask everyone to note that Greece is accessible to all interested parties.

Michael Cramer (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to point out once again that everyone is in favour of giving passengers with restricted mobility their rights as well. However, when it is a question of who receives preferential treatment and of a possible reduction in operators' profits, then the answer is a definite no. In this case, it is made quite clear that the focus is not on disabled people. This situation must change.

Mrs Wortmann-Kool says that the problem lies with the small operators, but this is not true. The large companies have lobbied on this issue and were opposed to the solution. They are using the small operators as a pretext to protect their interests. We could come to a compromise for the small operators, but from an overall perspective, we must tackle the large organisations. They are not prepared to show any consideration for passengers with restricted mobility. This is unacceptable. These passengers must have the same rights as everyone else. We should be grateful that we do not have restricted mobility ourselves and, therefore, we should show our solidarity with those people who do.

Philippe Juvin (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, it is clear that these are not perfect texts. It is clear that one MEP or another would have liked to include this or that amendment. However, ladies and gentlemen, this text represents an excellent step forward for disabled people. How often have we heard of deplorable cases where disabled people were denied access to public transport? Well, this text will put an end to those incidents. It will put an end to discrimination against the disabled and the sick. Access will no longer be restricted.

Let us be aware of what this text represents, namely, real progress, not to mention the excellent provision which stipulates that on-board staff should be trained to deal with disabled persons. This also represents a

significant move forward for disabled people. Thus, we should stop talking about integrating disabled people into society. We should actually implement this integration process. That is what the text is doing, and I think that we should welcome that fact.

This text will allow the European institutions to really improve the lives of disabled people. We should congratulate the rapporteurs. That is what I would now like to do, on behalf of all disabled people. Let us not hide our satisfaction.

IN THE CHAIR: GIANNI PITTELLA

Vice-President

Siim Kallas, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I must express my gratitude for the involvement of the European Parliament and for the extensive work undertaken. We are moving in the same direction.

As regards the maritime rights of passengers travelling by sea and inland waterways, the conclusions are positive. It is essential to accomplish the objective of establishing a basic set of rights for passengers on all modes of transport. This has been underlined here many times and we cannot leave out bus and coach passengers.

I must just underline one thing, because one element which can be tackled from different angles is economic reasons: economic arguments and passenger rights. We see it in aviation as well. We are all in favour of competitiveness; we are all in favour of economic success; we are all in favour of low costs and efficiency but, at the same time, all service providers in transport must also offer high quality services. For me, high quality services mean, above all, taking care of punctuality and timetable information. We must move in this direction and no one – big companies, small companies – can have any derogation from these rules. You must provide punctuality and you must serve your clients with high responsibility in order to provide high quality. Then we can also move ahead with all the other issues.

Thank you for this discussion. In the conciliation process for the Bus and Coach Passengers Directive, we will try to find compromises which work towards finding such a solution. I hope we will have good cooperation with the rapporteurs during the process for the next directives.

Antonio Cancian, *rapporteur*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have listened to all the speeches and must only emphasise that we began from a first reading of the Albertini report with a courageous text and have achieved a result in the Committee on Transport and Tourism on a report that is much compromised, respecting in part the will of the Council, with an almost unanimous vote.

The Commissioner has, on several occasions, promised a single unifying text. In this context, I hope that the new Belgian Presidency will want to include this text on its agenda, thereby allowing the completion of the framework of regulations for passengers on all modes of transport, with a view to considering the laying down of common and horizontal measures for all modes of transport. This is something which we absolutely need.

Inés Ayala Sender, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Mr President, I would like to thank my fellow Members and the Commissioner and Vice-President, Mr Kallas, for his kindness and encouraging words.

I would like to clear up some things Mrs Lichtenberger said about the ports. I do not think she has read the text closely. It is true that we have not managed to include all ports, because some ports simply consist of a jetty, but there are obligations for ports given that, for example, all new or renovated ones are obliged to provide complete accessibility and equipment, something that we have rightly obliged the Council to remove from the provision in which it was excluded. Mrs Lichtenberger, if you read Annex II, you will see that reference is indeed made there to the obligations for assistance in ports and port terminals. Moreover, we have included the port authorities, in spite of the fact that the Council was reluctant as regards certain aspects, precisely for them to become increasingly aware of the needs of persons with reduced mobility.

Therefore, ports do have obligations. Ports are included, so it is not only boats and ships, but also port terminals and ports that have obligations.

As far as flexibility and exceptions are concerned, and at this juncture, I would like to thank Mr Kuhn and Mrs Wortmann-Kool for their speeches, I think we really have made an effort to be flexible and to help small enterprises, particularly at this time of crisis. I can understand Mr Cramer's anger, because the truth is that the stakeholders we are dealing with are mainly large companies, but this is because European associations,

true to their nature as such, include both small enterprises and big companies. The fact that the stakeholders we are dealing with are sometimes, or quite often, those that represent the big companies does not mean that small companies are not members of European associations as well. I think that we have made an effort to understand all parties.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Mrs Bilbao for the support and solidarity shown as regards improving the rights of disabled persons. I especially want to thank her for highlighting the accessible format issue, and for the fact that, at last, the Council has renounced the health issue – which I do think was a risk with respect to which work will have to be done in the future, but this was certainly not the right time – and also for everything concerned with the reduction of deadlines and with improvements.

Lastly, I would, of course, like to thank all my fellow shadow rapporteurs and, above all, I would like to congratulate European passengers, because we in the sector – the carriers, the operators, the terminals the ports and the authorities – and the Member States now have 24 months of preparation before us. Then it will have to be applied.

I have a specific request, Mr Kallas, when the time comes for its application. I have seen that you are going to launch a magnificent information and awareness campaign relating to air passenger rights. I would ask you, and would like you to commit to conducting an equally marvellous campaign along these lines for the maritime sector in two years' time when the regulation for sea sector passengers comes into force. I think that the European public deserves as much.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Tuesday, 6 July 2010).

Written statements (Rule 149)

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) The draft regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the rights of passengers in bus and coach transport should increase passenger rights in this form of transport, establish quality standards comparable with those of railway and air transport and unify the current legislative conditions for transport from all Member States. At first reading, Parliament quite rightly requested unlimited liability for carriers in the event of passenger death or injury caused by the carrier, and also the right to an advance payment in the event of financial problems caused by a transport accident. The draft also banned any form of discrimination based on physical disability or reduced mobility. We requested compensation for passengers amounting to 50% plus of the price of a ticket and assistance in the event of cancellations or delayed connections in the form of food, drink, free accommodation and transfers to locations from which it would be possible to continue a journey by other means. The only exemptions from this regulation should be suburban and urban transport. However, the Council has completely changed the scope and level of passenger rights in this form of transport, and is even requesting an exemption for regional scheduled transport and up to 15 years for national scheduled and international transport. We will not actually guarantee any passenger rights by adopting the Council's position, and we will confirm only minimal legislative liability for carriers. I cannot agree with this position at all and I would like to ask you to support the position of the European Parliament from first reading.

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), in writing. – (IT) People with disabilities must be able to travel, enjoying the rights of freedom of movement, freedom of choice and non-discrimination just like all other citizens. Access to means of transport on an equal standing with other users is essential for independence and dignity in daily life. We must battle to ensure that the rights of 'accessibility' and 'personal mobility' sanctioned by Articles 9 and 20 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are translated into real action to finally give form to a new and effective European strategy on disabilities for the coming decade. I strongly support this report, which aims to guarantee the effective protection of bus passengers with reduced mobility. Ladies and gentlemen, this sector urgently requires regulation at the European level. It is absolutely unacceptable that some citizens are discriminated against in our cities and States due to their disabilities. Therefore, the European Parliament must take the lead and remedy once and for all the lack of consistency that, even today, we find in Member States' legislation on the subject.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – This proposal is good news for travellers with disabilities or limited mobility, who deserve to be treated fairly by transport operators. As things stand, we know that from 2012, any disabled boat passenger will have improved rights, including a guarantee of the right to board and free assistance in the port. I am very hopeful that we will be able to get bus and coach passengers included in a balanced agreement that will be good for passengers and operators. This is a very welcome step towards

addressing practical impediments faced by disabled passengers. It would be astonishing if the Member States tried to block our call for bus and coach passengers with disabilities to be covered by this legislation. I remain confident that we can agree on one overarching piece of legislation to cover all boat, bus and coach passengers to come into force in 2012.

Antonio Masip Hidalgo (S&D), *in writing*. – (ES) It is extremely important to avoid discrimination against those of us who suffer, as I do, from reduced mobility.

At Brussels airport, we are asked, sometimes some of us are even ordered, to get onto and get off an interior transport coach twice, when obstacles such as doors should simply be avoided and passengers not hassled by being made to get on and get off.

16. Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and interfaces with other transport modes (debate)

President. – The next item is the recommendation for second reading on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism on the common position adopted by the Council at first reading with a view to the adoption of a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and interfaces with other modes of transport (06103/4/2010 – C7-0119/2010 – 2008/0263(COD)) (rapporteur: Anne E. Jensen) (A7-0211/2010).

Anne E. Jensen, *rapporteur*. – (DA) Mr President, what are intelligent transport systems exactly? Well, they comprise any information systems that could make road transport safer, more efficient and more environmentally sound. They include the GPS that we are familiar with when we are driving around our towns, and can include road tax systems or road toll systems. We are already familiar with some intelligent transport systems, but there are many more on the way. There are systems that will be able to provide us with much better information on the situation on the roads. Are there slippery roads ahead? Has there been an accident that is causing queues to build up? We also have the eCall system, which is a system that automatically calls an emergency call centre when an accident happens so that help can arrive faster.

I would like to say that, right from the outset, I found working on this report frustrating in a number of respects. At first I found it quite difficult to determine what intelligent transport systems actually are, because they include so many different things. Once I had discovered the possibilities that they held, I was actually frustrated by the fact that we did not already have these intelligent transport systems. When you sit in a traffic queue and do not know when, or if, you will be able to reach your destination and, for example, catch your flight, it would actually be nice to already have those systems in place now. We could obtain much better information.

Therefore, it has to be asked: why then do we not have these intelligent transport systems? The answer provided by the Commission and by experts has been that it is due to the lack of standards and specifications that can promote the use of our common transport systems, promote the production of them and also ensure that it becomes easier to drive across borders, so that, for example, a lorry can drive from Gothenburg to Palermo and communicate with all manner of different information systems, including different road tax systems, without needing to have various different gadgets plastered all over the windscreen to communicate with different systems.

According to the agreement that has now been concluded with the Council, we are to define specifications for intelligent transport systems within four areas, and in association with six actions for which deadlines have been set. It is about ensuring that safety-related information is provided, ensuring that general traffic information is provided, ensuring that eCall is in place, and it is about ensuring something that I personally feel is very important, and that is that lorry drivers can receive information on where to find safe rest areas and have the opportunity to book a rest area in advance so that compliance with the regulations on driving times and rest periods is less stressful for them.

The greatest sticking point in our work was the question of the practical implementation of all this. The Council agreed with Parliament that we definitely should define the areas where work should be done on common specifications and standards. The area where the Council shied away from our proposals was in connection with establishing when the agreed specifications should be in place in practice. We have therefore divided the implementation into two timescales: first, we will agree on the specifications and then we will determine how it is to be put into practice.

I would like to thank the shadow rapporteurs for their cooperation in achieving this outcome, especially Mr Koch, Mrs Țicău and Mrs Brepoels. I think we worked together in an unparalleled manner. I would also like to offer my sincere thanks to the Swedish Presidency, which made an enormous effort to ensure that many of Parliament's proposals were implemented in the final text. Finally, I would like to thank the Commission, which really has been the facilitator in this matter, and made a huge contribution to enabling us to reach a joint agreement.

Siim Kallas, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to thank the European Parliament and especially Ms Jensen, rapporteur on intelligent transport systems, and all the shadow rapporteurs, for their excellent work and continuous commitment in supporting the Commission in the legislative process leading to the ITS Directive.

At the end of the European Parliament's second reading of this legislative proposal, I would like to reaffirm once again, and in the strongest possible terms, its political importance. ITS applications such as dynamic traffic and freight management, lane-keeping support and electronic tolling (e-Toll) bring clear benefits to transport users in terms of reducing travel times and increasing safety.

Over the past 20 years, the European Commission has used various instruments to support the uptake of ITS solutions. However, the deployment of intelligent transport systems in road transport has been much slower than in other modes of transport, and ITS services have often been deployed on a fragmented basis. Voluntary agreements and standardisation have failed to deliver significant progress in terms of deployment and use of such systems.

Therefore, the Commission has put forward an action plan and a proposal for a framework directive on the deployment of intelligent transport systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other transport modes.

Concerning this directive, the Commission considers that the compromise obtained during the negotiations with the Council is balanced, and that the general objectives of the Commission's proposal are duly taken into account. In this context, I am particularly happy with the recommendation of Ms Jensen adopted by the TRAN Committee vote on 22 June and I look forward to a positive vote and to the adoption by the European Parliament of the ITS Directive during tomorrow's sitting.

The Commission is fully committed to the important work ahead of us in implementing the ITS Directive. We will do so in close collaboration with all public and private stakeholders.

Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, the directive for the deployment of intelligent transport systems in the field of road transport, which we will finally be voting on tomorrow, is of huge importance for other modes of transport because of its impact on the interfaces with them that I regard it as the emergence of a new era of transport.

The directive is responsible for the coordinated, concentrated and targeted implementation of the comprehensive action plan and will guarantee that intelligent transport systems become an integral component of new types of vehicles and infrastructures. The decisive issue for consumers is firstly that intelligent transport systems will have to be introduced, but no one can definitely say when. Personally, I should very much have preferred a detailed timetable.

Secondly, they will play a major role in making transport cleaner, safer and more efficient and they will offer completely new opportunities for comodality, in other words, for integrating different modes of transport. Thirdly, they will guarantee a high level of data protection and, fourthly, they can be used to optimise infrastructure capacity. My fifth point is that they will offer a wide range of additional services for private individuals and business people.

Intelligent transport systems blend harmoniously into the next report on the future of transport and also into the Europe 2020 strategy, because they will give rise to extensive research and development projects. The call for compatibility between new systems and with existing systems is in line with Parliament's demands. On behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), I urge the Commission to put in place the standards and specifications for the eCall emergency system and for all the travel, transport information and reservation systems as quickly as possible, so that the process of introducing these systems throughout Europe can begin very soon.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (RO) The adoption of a directive on the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other modes of transport is an important step towards increasing safety in the transport sector.

I wish to thank all the teams of rapporteurs for extending the directive's scope beyond the road transport sector by including interfaces with other modes of transport. This will enable Intelligent Transport Systems to be used for passengers, vehicles and infrastructures and for interactions between them in the field of road transport, including urban transport and interfaces with other modes of transport.

The European Parliament has requested, right from first reading, a minimum number of applications and services supported by Intelligent Transport Systems, as well as stringent personal data protection provisions. The directive stipulates four priority areas where the Commission will define common specifications and standards for implementing and using Intelligent Transport Systems.

The Commission has made the commitment to adopt the specifications quickly within the following clearly defined timetable: 2014 for the provision of EU-wide multimodal travel information services; 2013 for the provision of EU-wide real-time traffic information services; 2012 for the provision of minimum universal traffic information free of charge relating to road safety; 2012 for the harmonised provision of an interoperable EU-wide eCall system; 2012 and 2013 for the provision of information and reservation services for safe parking places for trucks.

The adoption of this directive has been delayed as a result of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the comitology provisions. In fact, the abovementioned specifications will be adopted by the Commission by means of delegated acts.

I believe that we are only at the start of the road in terms of deploying Intelligent Transport Systems. We hope that both the Commission and Member States will allocate the finances required to deploy these systems.

Gesine Meissner, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I believe that Mr Koch is right when he says that intelligent transport systems will take us into a new era. In the last year, I have come across lorries that can talk to one another. It sounds crazy, but this really is the intelligent transport management system of the future. Special devices enable lorries to identify for safety reasons whether there is an obstacle or a pedestrian crossing the road in front of them. They can then pass the information to the lorry travelling behind, so that it can brake in good time and prevent an accident from occurring.

Of course, this is not yet on the agenda. In this case, the major benefit of Mrs Jensen's report is that it gives us an overview of the current situation and an insight into what we will need in future in order to improve safety, prevent congestion, reduce accidents and take more effective action on the environment.

My final point concerns something which I have experienced myself near Hanover in Germany. On the motorway, there is an intelligent transport system consisting of variable speed limits. These tell drivers what speed they should travel at in order to prevent traffic jams. This is good for drivers and for the environment and also reduces the number of accidents. We need systems of this kind and much more.

Frieda Brepoels, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, obviously I am delighted that we have, at last, adopted a European framework for ITS. As previous speakers have said, it was a tough nut to crack and it is also thanks to the tireless efforts of our rapporteur, Mrs Jensen, that we have finally, after some tough negotiations, been able to present a balanced position to Parliament. Thank you very much for that.

If we consider that the problems of congestion and pollution are becoming ever more serious, we can hardly overestimate the importance of this initiative. There is very clearly a need for innovative solutions, but why is it that a European approach is now so important? In my view, it is important because we are unlikely to be able to make full use of the possibilities of ITS unless we progress from the limited or even piecemeal deployment which is the reality in many Member States today to a coordinated Europe-wide deployment.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is, however, only the first step, but it is a very important one nonetheless. Over the coming years, we must keep close track of how both the Commission and the Member States implement priority actions. We have actually already wasted half a year or so on the timeframe presented by the Commission in response to the debate on the implementation of the delegated acts. In general, however, I think that we should see to it that the services envisaged are user friendly for all groups. In this context, we are very pleased that specific provisions have been introduced for vulnerable road users, because attention to this will lead to improved quality for all users. Thank you for your attention.

Anna Rosbach, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Mr President, on the windscreen of my car I have a small electronic device which records when I drive through a toll booth in my home country. I was very pleased to discover recently that it also works when I drive through a similar booth in my neighbouring country. How nice it would be if it was that easy throughout the whole of Europe, and that is exactly what my fellow Danish Member, Mrs Jensen, wants for everyone who drives a great deal on Europe's roads. I would therefore like to offer my sincere thanks to the rapporteur for the sterling work that she has done on this directive.

It has been a long time coming, and contains a whole series of both technical and specific initiatives. I abide by the principle that I only recommend EU legislation if it makes sense, and for me this means that it should relate to cross-border problems that are best solved jointly. I must say that this subject meets this requirement very well. At the same time, this directive offers a helping hand to the lorry drivers who bind Europe together. Without them, none of the trade within the EU would exist.

Now all we need is for the Member States to put all of these good intentions into practice. As far as I can see, this is where the problem lies, for although the Council is co-legislator for the directive, roads are built in small national municipalities that do not have much money for this purpose. Similarly, a lot of money and political will is also needed to upgrade the rail transport system.

Georgios Koumoutsakos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, the spread of intelligent transport systems in road transport and in their operation in relation to other forms of transport is a particularly important issue. It is a real challenge for European transport policy and previous speakers were right to speak of a new era in transport.

The broadest possible application of intelligent transport systems will help, firstly, to bring about more efficient, more stable and safer transport and, secondly, to achieve the objective of cleaner and more environmentally friendly transport.

I therefore believe that approval of the framework directive on intelligent transport systems is a very positive development for all European citizens because, to date, the voluntary approach has been far from satisfactory. We need – and we all agree on this – a minimum level of standardisation if we want to see these systems being used on our journeys and travels in the very near future.

Like the rapporteur, Mrs Jensen, whom I congratulate, I believe that we should proceed and give our approval tomorrow, in order, moreover, to confirm that long, hard negotiations have taken place, lasting until just a short while ago, and that we must now proceed.

The last thing we need is another unnecessary delay in the overall procedure. Congratulations again to the rapporteur.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I would especially like to congratulate Mrs Jensen and thank her for her dedication and determination as regards these intelligent transport systems, particularly with respect to roads, in order to achieve harmonisation and, above all, backward compatibility, which I believe to be essential.

In recent days, I have read how an operator such as SNCB in Brussels proposed to offer car drivers traffic information in real time in order to help them take intermodal decisions sufficiently in advance. I understand that this is one of the aspects of the services of the future referred to by Mrs Jensen, the harmonisation of which is going to enable their spectacular extension throughout Europe.

I believe that this dialogue between modes of transport is essential, as is the cross-border one between road systems, which can also encourage other aspects of road safety.

I particularly thank her for the road safety applications and, above all, the extension throughout Europe of the eCall system. I would also have liked it to be extended, and indeed hope it can be in the future, beyond the trans-European network infrastructure and, above all, to farming vehicles, given that quite often we find, particularly in regions like the one where I come from, that there is an accident and the person dies because it has not been possible to get there in time, or because his emergency call was not received. For that reason, I hope it can be extended.

Safe and secure parking places for trucks and commercial vehicles are very useful, and receive my full support. I believe that they should be increasingly extended in the future to trans-European road networks.

The only thing I think we now need is for Galileo to become the platform for this kind of service; that would indeed be the icing on the cake. I hope that between them, Mr Kallas and Mr Tajani manage to achieve this, so that these intelligent transport systems become, moreover, Galileo's future.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, better management of goods transport and greater road safety are two fundamental aspects in creating an intelligent transport system. The aim is to create a coordinated and integrated system, guaranteeing continuity of services, of traffic management and goods transport along freight corridors.

The key issue remains the financial impact of this innovative system, which principally consists of traffic communication interfaces, and which could be solved by standardising an integrated information system. Efficacy, efficiency, continuity and interoperability are the principles upon which the future actions of the Member States should be based. A correct evaluation of territorial features, traffic conditions and processes of interconnection between the various transport systems will therefore be necessary for a properly effective implementation of the system.

A serious investigation into how the system will react in critical moments will then be needed. Hopefully, the committee created by the directive will be able to work with local authorities so that the system is designed to guarantee a rapid and efficient response in case of transport-related problems.

Ádám Kósa (PPE). – (HU) I, too, would like to welcome the introduction of intelligent transport systems as they will make people's lives much easier. I would like to draw your attention to three issues. One of these is something that also came up in relation to passengers' rights; namely, that the European Parliament is strongly committed to helping people with disabilities. However, I would like to emphasise that people with disabilities will have to be helped in this system, too, and I suggest that the problems faced by people with disabilities also be taken into consideration in the course of the introduction of the system, as well as by the system developers. Also, I would like to highlight the importance of information communications accessibility. Finally, since some of the Member States have not yet carried out impact assessment studies on the cost of introducing the system, I would like to ask the Commission to dedicate separate resources for this purpose before the system is introduced to allow Central and Eastern European countries to access it.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Introducing a standard framework for the harmonised deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems is an important step towards modernising the transport sector. It means that Member States must guarantee the deployment and coordination of ITS in an interoperable manner.

As rapporteur for the European rail freight corridors dossier, I think that interoperable ITS systems are an absolute must for the rail sector, especially in terms of traffic management. For this reason, reciprocal recognition is required of national type approvals and specifications for IT hardware and software, as well as compliance with the schedule for rolling out the ERTMS.

The fact that Member States have the opportunity to come into line with the new requirements by modernising their already existing systems is a positive step, thereby preventing a lack of geographical continuity from occurring.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I suppose one could say that one would want to be pretty stupid to oppose intelligent proposals. Certainly, the Intelligent Transport Systems cannot be opposed: they are to be welcomed. Compliments to Mrs Jensen and also Mr Kallas for outlining the benefits. Obviously, things that make for environmentally friendly transport, road safety, proper parking, tracking weather systems, etc. are all of tremendous benefit to road users.

Regarding road safety, I would also like to see some emphasis being put on the effect that slow drivers have on road accidents. All the emphasis seems to be on speed, and obviously that is a major contributory factor.

However, this is to be welcomed and I just want to thank the intelligent Mrs Jensen, for helping to make road use beneficial for all users, be they stupid or intelligent.

Antonio Cancian (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the definition of these European specifications for the coordinated development of the selected ITS applications for transport and air travel networks is very useful. However, I wanted to underline two facts regarding security. The first is that we should try to insist strongly on safe parking facilities for lorry drivers. Secondly, when speaking about safety, I believe that we need to be careful: drivers are asked to do everything but drive, they are given so much information and are pestered with everything and more.

So this is now a very important issue and I address this consideration to Mrs Jensen because I believe that, on the one hand, there is this desire and, on the other, we need to be very careful to act in such a way that drivers can also think about driving.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President, road safety and security applications represent a major component of the four important areas and I would like to comment on them briefly here. Firstly, the Commission proposals to allow the introduction of huge lorries, referred to as gicaliners, should be rejected. Gicaliners would increase the risks on the EU's roads. The European road network is not designed for vehicles of this size. They would reduce visibility for car drivers and result in longer overtaking distances and disastrous accidents.

My second point is that the often catastrophic results of tunnel fires indicate that vehicle fire prevention systems need to be improved. I am calling for all cars in Europe to be fitted with a mandatory fire extinguishing system in the engine compartment. These systems are already used in motor racing and the mass-produced versions cost between EUR 50 and EUR 100. They are relatively cost-effective and would result in a significant increase in safety.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, millions of European citizens are preparing to depart on a deserved summer holiday. Unfortunately, however, just like every other year, they have to prepare themselves to deal with cancelled flights, lost luggage, motorway traffic jams, perhaps even under the baking sun, and emergency situations to which we are now, unfortunately, quite accustomed.

Last week, I tabled a question on this subject, asking the European Commission to make a concrete effort to deal with this problem. Launching an information campaign on the rights of travellers is certainly a useful tool, but it is not enough to avoid such emergencies being repeated. All too often, the rights of travellers are trampled underfoot and months, even years, go by before receiving rightful compensation.

Providing information, making people aware of their rights, is clearly important, but it is much more important to make them respected across Europe by introducing concrete measures, particularly in the light of now common situations, which ought to be foreseen.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like once more to thank the European Parliament, and Ms Jensen in particular, for the excellent work in the legislative process leading to the adoption of the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive. I look forward to the important work ahead of us in the implementation of the ITS Directive. We are committed to using the power conferred on the Commission by Parliament and the Council for seven years to adopt the necessary specifications. We will do so in close collaboration with all relevant public and private stakeholders.

Anne E. Jensen, rapporteur. – (DA) Mr President, my thanks go to all my fellow Members for the comments that we have received. I think the debate shows that there is a lot of enthusiasm for this issue, as well as high expectations that we will be able to achieve good results. I would also like to thank the Commissioner for his promise to set about making things happen and to work closely with all of the actors in this area. I also know that the Commission has promised to work closely with the Member States on these matters. There has been a great deal of anxiety in the Member States with regard to the risk that those Member States that have already invested in intelligent transport systems would find that their investments have been in vain if suddenly, different specifications and standards were chosen.

I believe it is important that, with this legislation, we have now created a platform for Member States, all of the experts and the Commission to be able to meet and discuss these issues, and we can hope that the actions and practical projects to be implemented will achieve a common understanding of the path these things should take. In any case, I think that we have done a lot of work to ensure that these things should, and could, be developed from the ground up and that we have not merely set out directives from above, but that there has actually been a dialogue about these things.

Finally, I would like to mention that we have also had discussions in Parliament about whether intelligent transport systems will make us more intelligent or less intelligent. Clearly, as someone pointed out, we must use intelligent transport systems in an intelligent way. I support this viewpoint. It is easy to see that people who use their GPS do not have a clue where they have ended up because they have simply followed the voice that said: 'Turn right, turn left'. In the end, they do not know where they are. An intelligent transport system must be used in an intelligent way.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Tuesday, 6 July 2010).

Written statements (Rule 149)

Alajos Mészáros (PPE), in writing. – (HU) There is a strong need for the development of intelligent transport systems in road transport, as the transport systems of the European Union are increasingly overburdened. According to various forecasts, by 2020, goods transport by road will increase by 55% and road passenger transport by 36%. This will result in increased energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions from road transport. We must do our best to make road transport safer, cleaner and more efficient with the help of innovative research. This, however, will require an unprecedented level of cooperation from us, since the non-harmonised solutions currently used at a local, regional and national level may threaten the development of a single market, and this may lead to non-utilisation of the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). I am very pleased that the Council and Parliament are of the same opinion on this issue. I also believe that the ITS system must be implemented as soon as possible and particularly in urban and goods transport. However, in order to provide simple and swift access to the system for all, we will need a single system of standards which can guarantee effective cooperation on the part of Member States with one another and with the competent authorities. The increasing requirements of transportation cannot be met using existing measures. This is why we need new and innovative solutions. Reducing rising carbon dioxide emission levels by the means mentioned above is an additional challenge.

17. Reporting formalities for ships arriving in or departing from ports (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Dirk Sterckx, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on reporting formalities for ships arriving in and/or departing from ports of the Member States of the Community and repealing Directive 2002/6/EC (COM(2009)0011 – C6-0030/2009 – 2009/0005(COD)) (A7-0064/2010).

Dirk Sterckx, rapporteur. – (NL) Mr President, when a container is transported from Gdansk to Antwerp by a lorry, then that container remains within the EU and the goods do not have to be customs-cleared on arrival or departure. However, when you ship the same container from Gdansk to Antwerp, you first have to clear the goods on departure and then again on arrival, as if that container has left the EU. That is to the detriment of coastal transport and I think the Commission is right in wanting to rectify this disadvantage. I also think that coastal transport could take on a larger share of EU goods transport and that we ought to encourage that.

In that context, I welcome the agreement we have reached and I thank the people in the Council who worked on that, the people in the Commission and members in this House. We have reached a good agreement. The basic line taken by that agreement, the principle of administrative simplification and harmonisation, has been accepted. Data will always be exchanged electronically and everyone concerned will be able to view or enter data via what is known as a *single window*. That will allow computer systems to communicate with each other. Everything only has to be entered once and that is an enormous improvement.

Ships calling only at EU ports will also be granted an exemption from administrative formalities. What we have not achieved is permission for a ship to be granted exemption on the basis of its cargo, in respect of that cargo, if a ship has called at a port in a third country. The Commission will now look into how we might resolve this, that is, exemption on the basis of a ship's cargo. The Commission will also consider how we might interconnect the maritime and inland shipping systems so that we can establish a continuous and a fully sustainable chain for water-borne transport.

We have not reached any agreement on the use of a single communication language in shipping, in this case English, which was our proposal, and I think that is a pity. Many members here had objections to that. For the Council, it was absolutely out of the question. The most we were able to obtain here is to have a recital in the directive to the effect that Member States will seek to establish a common means of communication for written and oral communication. That could lead to a single language being used and I hope that will be the final outcome.

Still less have we been able to introduce anything into the directive about pilotage or the possibility of captains of coastal ships who regularly call at a particular port being granted exemption from compulsory pilotage. The Commission and the Council have now issued a statement to the effect that they will consider this issue. I hope that we will opt for a European framework in this respect and that this will become a reality within the earliest possible timeframe.

We had to strike a compromise regarding the date. The Council wanted to postpone the date too far ahead, whereas, in the Council's view, we wanted to set it too early. In the end, we agreed on 1 June 2015. I would have liked it to have been earlier, but I think that we can still condense this timeframe, thanks to the fact that we have reached a compromise in the first reading.

Mr President, I think that, all things considered, we have made a step forward. That is hugely important for the internal transport market. It is also a link in the sustainability of the transport sector in Europe and there are many more stages to follow, and the Commission knows that. Encouraging coastal trade is an important link. However, one thing which I keep noticing, time and again, is that the Council is being obstructive about this. The Council only looks at the costs and never wants to talk about what benefits a particular measure might spawn. The Council always wants implementation to take place as late as possible and never wants to consider the importance of faster completion of the single European market. That reluctance of the Council and that negative attitude towards a genuine European transport policy continue to both amaze and irritate me. I am pleased that Parliament, as well, has, on this occasion, urged that European solutions be found and that these solutions should preferably be found as soon as possible. I am therefore happy with the agreement we have reached and I would ask you, members of the House, to give it your support.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, firstly, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Dirk Sterckx, for his efforts on the directive on reporting formalities for ships arriving in, or departing from, ports. This is a very important step: it is not merely a matter of formality.

This directive simplifies administrative formalities for shipping services and will reduce costs for the economy and end consumers. Moreover, it will make short-sea shipping more attractive. The directive is part of the action plan to establish a European maritime transport space without barriers, with the concept of extending the internal market to intra-EU maritime transport by simplifying administrative routines.

Indeed, maritime transport is subject to complex administrative procedures even when vessels ply only between EU ports and the cargo consists only of internal market goods. The consequence is that the intra-EU maritime transport of goods is faced with unnecessary extra administrative costs.

An important issue raised during the discussion was a deadline for European ports to accept electronic transmission of port formalities. The compromise suggests 15 June 2015. We accept that the requirements for introducing a single window are stricter in the current text than in the Council's general approach. The Commission is also ready to look into the need for a clear framework for the granting of pilotage exemption certificates in European sea ports.

The Commission will communicate its findings to the other institutions and will propose further action based on these findings. The Commission also accepts the report on several other issues: possible extension of the directive to inland waterways; facilitation of intra-EU maritime transport in relation to ports outside the EU; collection of statistics; and updates of the technical provisions in the directive.

To conclude, the Commission supports the compromise reached by the rapporteur, Mr Sterckx, and the Council Presidency. This is a good and well-balanced compromise based on the general principles from the Commission's proposal.

Luis de Grandes Pascual, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (ES) Mr President, Mr Kallas, this is a directive that affects all customs formalities that apply to ships arriving in or departing from ports. Thus, it will favour short-distance maritime transport and will contribute to modal balance.

The aim, ladies and gentlemen, is to reduce and simplify the amount of information and number of documentation and physical controls carried out by ships with respect to goods. At present, this information must be provided and these controls carried out repeatedly. The attitude of the rapporteur, Mr Sterckx, who I would like to congratulate for his work, has been intelligent and open to dialogue. Particularly, as a shadow rapporteur, I feel represented in the final document and satisfied that my contributions have been taken on board. This is a process that has grown with time, during the course of which agreements were gradually reached, ranging from its adoption by the Committee on Transport and Tourism to the trilogue held on 7 June.

The end result has been the consensus reached between Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The agreements have covered some very important issues, to which the rapporteur and Commissioner Kallas have already referred. In my opinion, the compromise solutions reached with respect to the issue of the

languages used, the time limit for its entry into force, and the one-stop shop, are balanced and worthy of support. I think a good job has been done.

I would like to congratulate Mr Sterckx and believe the goals set for us by the Commission have been fully met. Moreover, I feel that we should be pleased about having reached this agreement between the three parties, the three institutions.

Debora Serracchiani, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I thank the rapporteur, Mr Sterckx, who has done excellent work on this report which deals with how to increase free movement in the maritime sector, for shipping within the European Union.

I agree with Mr Sterckx on the aim of this directive, which is to exempt all intra-European maritime goods transport from unnecessary administrative formalities. Indeed, in order to have a maritime transport space without barriers, it is not only important for the various competent authorities to work together well, but also for the various simplification systems to be implemented in parallel. This is in order to ensure the effective operation of the European maritime transport space without barriers, to make maritime goods transport more attractive, and to ensure it is used to the optimum extent.

Harmonisation of administrative procedures between the Member States will ensure the smoother running of maritime traffic between the various EU ports and will revive maritime goods transport, which today represents only 10% of the total. Maritime transport is, at present, still hampered by the administrative formalities imposed on it. Electronic systems should therefore come into operation as quickly as possible in order to allow a faster data exchange system.

Furthermore, interoperability is important for genuine simplification of administration. In fact, sending information by e-mail does no good and is of no use if the information systems are not technically interoperable.

With regards to language, I believe that the use of a common language would certainly benefit European maritime transport. This would enable communication to take place more smoothly, and thus cause less confusion and fewer administrative delays.

Jean-Paul Basset, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, the rather forbidding title of Mr Sterckx's report introduces a very important issue, which goes far beyond the administrative and technical matters that the title implies. It deals with an important political decision, namely, making the maritime transport sector more attractive, more efficient and more competitive. In our view, this is the sector of the future and provides the best means of transport from an environmental point of view.

Mr Sterckx's excellent report and the contributions of all the shadow rapporteurs will allow us to make significant progress in this field. From our point of view, this directive hits the mark: it will increase the level of harmonisation within the maritime transport sector, making it better coordinated and simplified.

We will therefore wholeheartedly support this report when we vote on the matter, even though we would have liked to see it implemented faster and to see more strength of resolve with regard to the introduction of a common language in that sector. However, we think that the compromises achieved with the Council are still acceptable. We therefore unreservedly support this report.

Peter van Dalen, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (NL) Mr President, the excellent report by my fellow Member, Mr Sterckx, has brought the European maritime transport market closer to becoming a reality. Fortunately, the exchange of data on cargo will become much simpler. However, the Committee on Transport and Tourism has emphasised a few points in the debate. As regards inland shipping, for example, we have agreed that the European Commission will report on the issue of whether the simplified procedures should apply to that sector, as well, and I hope that the Commission will ultimately arrive at that conclusion and come up with accompanying legislative proposals.

As far as exemption from compulsory pilotage is concerned, let us hope that a common framework is set up, because such a framework would make competition between piloting services even fairer, while, at the same time, guaranteeing the quality of pilotage.

As Mr Sterckx has already pointed out, the Committee on Transport and Tourism wanted one, common language to be used and Member States have promised a solution by which communication will be made more mutually intelligible. Mr President, while that might be a first step, it is too modest a one. As long as we have people being injured or even killed because the staff involved sometimes speak three or more

languages and do not understand each other, I will continue to work hard to ensure that English becomes the common language used, not only between maritime and inland shipping, but also within inland shipping itself. That way, we will be making a genuine step forward in terms of safety.

Dominique Riquet (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, first of all, I would like to sincerely thank Mr Sterckx for his work and congratulate him on the results of the negotiations with the Council.

The text on which we will vote in plenary represents the most important stage in implementing a European maritime transport space without barriers. On the one hand, it will contribute to making maritime transport more competitive, thereby providing European added value, which is much needed in this time of crisis, while simultaneously fostering an environmentally friendly means of transport.

The compromise achieved with the Council is ambitious. It aims to not only simplify the administrative formalities for ships arriving in and departing from ports, but also to work towards harmonising them. Furthermore, it will make the exchange of information via the SafeSeaNet interface significantly easier.

With respect to the sensitive issue of language, which has been raised on several occasions, I think that the compromise provides for a suitable solution. With regard to this matter, Recital 7(a) highlights the importance of facilitating written and oral communication, without imposing a single language, even if one language needs to be recommended as the common language. In the current situation, the position in favour of adopting a single language appears to have failed to take into account all specific characteristics and, in certain cases – notably where the same language is not shared by all parties involved – it could give rise to negative consequences.

I welcome the compromise achieved with the Council. The possibility that the text may be adopted at first reading will allow us to quickly implement the relevant measures, as a result of Mr Sterckx's perseverance.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The directive on reporting formalities for ships arriving in and/or departing from ports of the Member States envisages simplification of customs formalities, the wider use of electronic data exchange and the introduction of e-maritime systems, the creation of a single window and simplified regulations for hazardous goods. The implementation of this directive requires a good level of cooperation between the various relevant authorities.

The Commission will report to Parliament by 31 December 2011 at the latest on extending the scope of the simplifications introduced by this directive to cover inland waterway transport. With this in mind, the Commission will determine to what extent the River Information System is compatible with SafeSeaNet, the electronic data exchange platform used to implement this directive.

In addition, the report recommends via Amendment 9, with a view to ensuring more effective communication, the use of Regulation 14 of the SOLAS Convention, which provides for the use of English as a working language.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas referred to a European maritime transport space without barriers. I believe that this is something that we all want. We also need it urgently and this report is another step in the right direction.

It is a fact that 95% of our exports and 40% of intra-European goods are transported by sea and therefore pass through ports. For this reason, it is clearly absolutely essential for administrative procedures to be simplified and harmonised within this growth area. This report will meet both these objectives, which is why it cannot be praised highly enough.

I regret the fact that Mr Sterckx was not able to achieve everything. Two points which were very close to his heart and which many other Members supported, as we have heard, are the simplification of the pilot licensing system, because this would be a really sensible, practical solution, and the lack of a common language. I believe that English really is the right language. It is unacceptable for accidents to happen in which people can even lose their lives simply because many seafarers speak different languages. It would be much better to introduce a common language in this very environmentally friendly area of transport, in just the same way as in the air transport industry.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, thank you all very much for your remarks and your unanimous support for this proposal.

I am very happy about this proposal. It is an important step forward, but we will have a much bigger step ahead of us in this task of establishing a single maritime area for European shipping, namely customs barriers. There, we will see a lot more difficulties.

Now we are talking about formalities, and this is very important, more important than just an administrative question, but I also ask your support when we come to do the same with customs formalities, which are much more complicated and controversial.

Dirk Sterckx, *rapporteur*. – (NL) Mr President, I would once again like to thank all the members who have spoken on this subject and I wish to thank them for their kind words. In his last speech, the Commissioner put his finger on one sore point, and that is customs. One of the advantages of the report that we have drafted is that customs systems will not be totally separate from maritime systems. They must be able to communicate with each other and, in my opinion, that is essential. So, thank you for pointing that out, Commissioner, but in this directive, we also make a number of demands on you, such as pilotage, where ports have a pivotal role to play as points of intersection. Ports are links between coastal shipping and the rest of the hinterland. We are still awaiting a number of proposals from the Commission on a policy on ports and it is important that we finally get one, because good coastal shipping is of little use without good ports.

Secondly, a fundamental requirement of inland shipping is good hinterland connections with other transport modes. We should not forget that. Obviously, I think it is a pity that we have not been able to agree on English being the single language for our communication. I understand very well the sensitivities around this issue in many Member States. I come from a country where debates on language and the use of language are almost the order of the day. I am very proud of my language and I use it everywhere I can, certainly here in this Tower of Babel. However, in this instance, language is not an emotive issue, but a practical one. We should be able to distinguish between those two things. Commissioner, I hope that we will be able to make progress on that issue on the basis of the recital we have included in the directive. Another important aspect is our relations with international maritime organisations, because they are the arenas where many important agreements are made on behalf of the entire maritime sector. The language issue conceals the issue of people. You have already mentioned that, or one of the members did. The issue of which language we should use might be an important one, but the people who will be using that language are hugely important for the development of a sound maritime sector which is safe and efficient and which delivers on many environmental requirements.

Commissioner, I wish you a lot of courage, strength and good speed in the finalisation of the things we have requested in Article 11(a) of this directive.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Tuesday, 6 July).

IN THE CHAIR: Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT

Vice-President

18. A sustainable future for transport (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mathieu Grosch, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on a sustainable future for transport (2009/2096(INI)) (A7-0189/2010).

Mathieu Grosch, *rapporteur*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, this own-initiative report has given rise to many interesting discussions and exchanges of opinion with fellow Members and also to a relatively large number of amendments, 376 in total, which we have been able to summarise in around 34 compromises. The success of our efforts is due to positive cooperation with the shadow rapporteurs, who are the authors of these amendments. However, it is also the result of the fact that on the Committee on Transport and Tourism, we wanted to use this document to set a clear example to the Council and the Commission in order to determine the direction that we need to move in. We also believe that this will form an interesting foundation for the Commission's White Paper, which we are expecting to see this year.

One of the most important aspects of the report, from a purely economic perspective, is that all forms of transport will be needed in the future, for both passengers and goods, in order to provide the necessary level of mobility. Of course, efficient comodality has this economic side to it, but its efficiency must also be

evaluated on the basis of environmental, social and safety criteria. This means that we need comodality in the future which takes into consideration the four main aspects of transport.

The completion of the internal market is an important factor for us. It is not simply that we feel that deregulation is very important. We must also work together to assess the deregulation. In addition, we must evaluate how the Member States are implementing the measures which they adopted five or 10 years ago. Rail transport is one very good example of this, as progress here has been poor and hesitant.

Safety and the rights of passengers are areas of great importance to the citizen. In previous debates and in this debate, we have seen that safety is a core concept for all types of transport and we need to decide on the objectives here too. We want to see a programme with clear goals covering the next five years, because more than 40 000 deaths and 300 000 injuries on the roads are far too many. We can reduce these figures if the Member States have the determination to implement certain proposals.

In simple terms, European agencies represent the future for us in their role as European regulators. However, this also means that some states will simply have to give up their national autonomy in certain areas, including safety, and hand over responsibility to a more centralised structure, so that the differences that currently arise at national boundaries can be eliminated.

Of course, reducing CO₂ emissions is another important component of this report. Road transport accounted for 70% of emissions from the transport sector and this percentage has risen in recent years, as it has for transport as a whole. The most recent figure for the entire sector is 27% and this has not fallen. Therefore, we can and must make every effort to improve the situation. This is why we have laid down clear goals, not only for road transport, but also for airlines. We believe that we can reduce CO₂ emissions by around 20% over the next 10 years, provided we have a clear strategy.

It is obvious that cities represent a major challenge. We expect that 80% of the population will be living in cities and that a corresponding level of mobility will be needed. These objectives have also been set. One final point is that transport can be integrated easily into the Europe 2020 strategy, because European research in the field of transport is an important aspect of the strategy, which we support. It can help people not only financially and with regard to efficiency, but also in the field of safety. Therefore, I hope that transport and mobility will play a more important role in European policy as a whole than I am afraid has often been the case in the past.

I would like to thank everyone for the very constructive support I have received from all the groups and all the Members for this report.

(Applause)

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Grosch, and the whole Committee on Transport and Tourism, for a high quality report. It is a very constructive and very balanced document. Its content can be widely shared.

I would like to emphasise a particular point that the report and the entire work of this committee point to. Transport is a sector that is crucial in many respects: for competitiveness, for the environment and for social and territorial cohesion. It is a policy area that deserves all our efforts and attention. I am happy that we have managed to give transport an important role in the Commission's EU 2020 strategy.

I am also glad to see that the approach proposed by the Commission in the communication 'A sustainable future for transport' is, to a large extent, shared by Parliament. The calls for efficient comodality and for the completion of the single market are fully in line with our intention to achieve a single transport area in which modes are seamlessly integrated and obstacles to open and efficient markets are removed.

I believe that efforts to provide better mobility solutions to citizens and businesses can go hand in hand with a transport system that emits less CO₂ and that would help our transport industry to remain in the lead, both on logistics and on transport equipment. The way to do this is by looking at transport as an integrated system in which infrastructure, transport information technologies and regulatory arrangements work together effectively.

Regarding infrastructure, we intend to focus on a multimodal core network that acts as the backbone of a pan-European transport system. On the Intelligent Transport Systems, we share the view that traffic management, as well as ticketing tools, should gradually become multimodal.

As for regulatory arrangements, I agree we have to complete the opening of transport markets, introduce smarter pricing that reflects all costs, including the externalities, and eliminate all barriers in terms of interoperability, technical standards, multiple paper documents, etc.

I am also particularly concerned about the citizens' perspective. We need to provide increased security and uniform passenger rights which will stimulate the use of collective transport. We also need to be ambitious in terms of safety on our roads.

Finally, we acknowledge that innovative thinking is needed to preserve personal mobility, while reducing CO₂ emissions. The Commission is supporting the development of new vehicle types by funding research and establishing standards. But national and local authorities also have great responsibilities, for instance, in ensuring that land use planning minimises congestion and unnecessary travel.

In a context of global economic downturn, the financing of transport infrastructure is a particularly sensitive aspect. We are looking at various approaches. There may perhaps be a single transport fund but the Commission will certainly insist on bringing together several EU funding instruments into a coherent funding framework.

In thanking Mr Grosch again for his report, I can only promise that it will be duly taken into account in the preparation of our White Paper on the future of sustainable transport.

Jo Leinen, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, transport policy is of great importance when it comes to protecting both the environment and people's health. It is good that the European Union has a strategy covering the period up to 2020 in order to resolve the many problems in current transport systems.

We need to see a significant reduction in the environmental impact of road transport. We need genuine innovations in this area to reduce CO₂ emissions and also nitrogen oxides and fine particulates. In addition, we must integrate air and sea transport more closely into our environmental strategy. In particular, in the case of sea transport, sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions are rising, and improvements are needed in this area.

The increase in the noise produced by transport is also a nuisance for millions of people, which impacts on their quality of life. Improvements must be made in road transport, but also in rail and air transport.

I would like to mention the internalisation of external costs. Company cars bring tax benefits and the airline industry does not pay excise duty on fuel, which means that we still have a great deal to do in this area. I would like to congratulate Mr Grosch on his excellent report.

Antonio Cancian, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I think the excellent work of Mr Grosch, on a report which was unanimously approved by the committee, should be highlighted straight away. Sincerest compliments and heartfelt congratulations to him.

I believe that this text is important. It is an important step for our programming for the future: the tricky task of setting out the guidelines for sustainable transport development. Obviously, this is a very wide-ranging issue, and as rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Industry, I was able to make a contribution to the drafting of this text.

Sustainability is an environmental, economic, social and generational concept: I believe that this text has the merit of bearing all these aspects in mind, setting out a series of priorities which should be enacted in order to develop the transport sector, for the improvement and the widespread use of intelligent transport systems, leading to the best possible connection between the transport means, the infrastructure and the driver.

However, as we follow this programming in the way that Mr Grosch set out earlier, we must also bear in mind – Commissioner – that this is a highly critical juncture and, as the European Union, we must throw our weight behind the realisation of these structures, or part of them.

Therefore, I would ask you – seeing as you mentioned this today too – to insist, including with regard to the timeframe, on the rationalisation of all possible resources, and try to include them in a package which aims finally to begin putting in place some important structures which have been planned for some time and which are now being reviewed for Europe 2020. I think we ought to send out some significant signals in the Member States.

Thanks once again to our Coordinator and fellow Member, Mr Grosch.

Seán Kelly, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development*. – (GA) Mr President, great credit is due to Mr Grosch for placing this report before us. I hope that we can accept the recommendations in general.

The 2020 strategy speaks extensively about movement – movement of people, movement of goods, movement of ideas, and certainly such concepts as youth on the move, adults on the move, in particular, tourism, where the aged are given an opportunity to move – and, of course, completing the single market. This all means that we need a sustainable transport system, and that has been addressed by Mr Grosch, in particular, in relation to the airports, such concepts as motorways of the seas – which is a wonderful development – and also rail connectivity, allowing people to move from one country to another by rail without any difficulty.

Also to be welcomed is the target of reducing emissions. Twenty-seven per cent of CO₂ comes from transport; this figure is to be reduced by at least 20%. And, of course, reducing fatalities on the roads – 40 000 per year on average and 300 000 injured. That is a huge figure and to reduce that by 40% would be a great development.

There is only one caveat where we are concerned in the Committee on Regional Development and that is the suggestion that a large transport fund will be created, with the possibility of 60% of cohesion funding going to it. That is not acceptable to the Regional Development Committee. I think there is a need for further discussion and dialogue in this area, because cohesion funding is about much more than transport, but hopefully we can reach an agreement.

(GA) And if we succeed in doing that and in solving that problem, we will be very fortunate.

Marian-Jean Marinescu, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (RO) Transport is a key component of the European Union's economy. Unfortunately, the EU's 2020 strategy makes very little mention of this sector, even though it is a powerful generator of jobs and sustainable economic growth.

The report drafted by Mathieu Grosch includes bold ideas and useful approaches for improving the sector at the present juncture. Europe's citizens are the main beneficiaries of the markets opening up in every transport sector.

The Commission and Member States must reassess their long-term investment plans, especially in the railway sector, so that they can achieve interoperability, for instance, an aspect which I regard as a priority for the European Union in the near future. Member States and the Commission must make sustained efforts to deploy and expand the ERTMS, Rail Net Europe and the European rail freight corridors, all large-scale projects requiring harmonisation and additional funding.

Extending intermodality is an effective way of reducing traffic jams and carbon dioxide emissions. Every means must be used to promote sustainable transport, especially rail, inland waterways and maritime transport.

Transport along inland waterways is still fragmented. This is why cooperation needs to be strengthened between the relevant institutions in all the states where this mode of transport is possible. The European Union offers huge untapped potential, especially along the Rhine-Main-Danube waterway. The future Danube strategy must include this aspect.

Intelligent modes of transport must be developed and expanded on a large scale. The European Commission must channel specific funds within the research sector, which is a priority area of the EU 2020 strategy, into expanding the applicability of intelligent and clean technologies in every transport sector.

Saïd El Khadraoui, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (NL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, this is an important debate, because it concerns the future of a sector which affects almost all our citizens, if not all of them, on a daily basis and which, on top of that, employs millions of people across Europe and confronts them with particularly big challenges. I agree with many of my fellow Members who have said that the rapporteur has produced an excellent piece of work and that he (together with the shadow rapporteurs, of course) is now able to present a superb report. Having said that, I would also like to mention my colleague, Magdalena Álvarez, who will be leaving us after this week, meaning that this is more or less the last report to which she will be able to contribute. So, thank you all for your fine work. In this report, the Commission has put forward a number of excellent recommendations for the White Paper due later this year. I certainly hope that it will be ready sooner rather than later, that is, in October/November rather than in December or even January 2011, because we need this White Paper in order to get down to work.

The greatest and undoubtedly the most complex challenge will be achieving a more sustainable and efficient transport system. There are no miracle solutions. If we want a low-carbon transport system, then we need to employ a whole host of measures: we have to work on research and development, introduce new technologies in the field, establish emissions standards and ensure internalisation of external costs via price mechanisms. We should also develop additional investments and so on and so forth. What I think is the bottom line here is that we use the most efficient modes of transport and that we make optimal use of our existing infrastructure, from an environmental and an economic perspective. In many cases, that will require a combination of modes of transport, and we therefore need to encourage intermodal transport by improving interoperability, not only between the modes, but also within individual modes. Just think of rail transport, where there is a great deal of work yet to be done.

In addition, there are obviously many other considerations. Transport is a very wide area. We could talk at length about transport for groups of people that we consider an extremely high priority. Here, I am referring to passenger rights and the social aspects of transport. It is particularly important that we now look at the issue of finance for new investments. We really have to show the necessary creativity in order to find additional resources in these difficult budgetary times. I will conclude by saying that we really need to come up with quantifiable targets for all manner of things connected with transport and I would ask the Commission to address that in the White Paper: we need specific quantifiable targets and a time scale so that we know how to implement all of that.

Nathalie Griesbeck, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to warmly thank the rapporteur, Mr Grosch, for his excellent report, and particularly for our excellent, courteous and effective working relationship. Our group is fully satisfied with the aims of the report and the principles it puts forward. I do not want to go back to the lengthy and in-depth debates on the issues of comodality, coordination, the completion of the internal market, decarbonisation, as well as all the other aspects and the debate on security, the distinction between security and safety, the importance of sanctions – especially cross-border sanctions – which, as well as being fundamental objectives for this future European transport policy, also coincide with what we want.

However, at the same time, this report is not an eclectic list of items – and we should welcome this fact – as Mr Grosch and his colleagues agreed to focus on aims which were both quantifiable and ambitious. What is more, I would like to state that, instead of a mere report, we have before us a real strategy. Therefore, it is important for this House, for Parliament to adopt the report by a very large majority, as in committee, so that rather than being in a position of power in relation to you, Commissioner, we may instead be in a position to firmly define our priorities with regard to this important matter, namely transport. As Mr Grosch reminded us, it constitutes the basis for the forthcoming White Paper, which we also hope to see very soon.

In fact, this is an opportunity to draw up an integrated and cross-cutting global policy, in order to meet current and future challenges, and to consolidate a real transport policy in Europe in order to make it a key EU policy. I would like to remind you that 10% of the EU's wealth depends on transport in Europe and more than 10 million people are directly or indirectly employed in this field.

I would like to put forward two ideas. The first idea is very close to my heart and involves taking into account the overall impact of each mode of transport on the environment. I do not mean that I wish to discriminate against any particular mode of transport as compared to another. I would, however, like to have access to additional information concerning the environmental impact and ask the European Investment Bank to focus its investments on transport companies with greener production methods.

Michael Cramer, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, if we want to put a stop to climate change, we have to take a different approach to mobility. Transport is responsible for 30% of the CO₂ emissions in the EU and, in contrast to industry and the insulation of houses, where we have achieved a reduction of 10% since 1990, the figures for transport have risen by 35%. All the savings made in other areas using billions of euro of our tax revenues are being eaten up by the transport sector.

Transport in general is too cheap and only environmentally transport is too expensive. This is the result of political decisions, but when we look at the future of transport, it becomes clear that things must change. Competition in this area is unfair. There is a mandatory toll with no upper limit for every kilometre of track that a train covers. In contrast, road tolls are not mandatory and are also capped. Air transport receives subsidies of around EUR 30 billion every year, but it is a climate killer. So, if we do not have enough money available to us, this is where we should be looking.

The EU's co-financing programmes also promote modes of transport which damage the environment. A total of 60% is spent on road transport and only 20% on railways and 0.9% on cycle routes. This situation must change and this is why we in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance are calling for at least 40% to go to environmentally friendly rail transport, a maximum of 20% to the roads and at least 15% to walking and cycling.

We welcome the fact that the rapporteur wants to achieve a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions from air and road transport by 2020, when compared with the 1990 figures, and we support this move. We would like to congratulate you on your report and also to thank you. However, we Greens also want to see a reduction of 30% in transport as a whole. This is the only way in which we can stop climate change and give our children and grandchildren a viable future on this planet. We must all work towards achieving this.

Oldřich Vlasák, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) One of the key questions facing us in the area of transport is how to resolve transport in cities. While more than 70% of Europeans live in cities today, by 2050, the number will be almost 85%. Cities are also important and integral parts of transport networks, since they are the transport nodes where different forms of transport come together. Journeys usually begin and end in cities. For these reasons, cities deserve to be the main focus of attention.

Unless our habits and approaches change, increasing urbanisation and the growing proportion of the urban population will lead to more frequent traffic jams and greater environmental problems. We must therefore achieve better integration between the different methods of transport in cities, including public transport. We must make it possible to establish functioning urban regions, towards which both European and national funds will be directed. It is necessary to adopt an integrated approach, to focus on the whole, not just on details such as the construction of a new bridge, the extension of a roadway or support for car parks.

New technologies must be the main driving force behind transport development in the cities. These technologies are providing more accurate information to city dwellers, improving the productivity of transport firms and the quality of life for inhabitants. They can reduce traffic jams, cutting fuel consumption and the amount of CO₂ produced. For example, the introduction of an intelligent tolling system in Stockholm dramatically reduced the transport burden and CO₂ emissions. The volume of road traffic in London has been reduced to the level of the 1980s by charging a fee to enter the city. All of this requires an adequate provision of accessible public transport. This is the way we must go.

Georgios Toussas, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Mr President, the report supports and further promotes the European Union transport policy, which obeys just one objective: to increase competitiveness and to safeguard – by which read maximise – the profits of monopoly business groups trading in the land, air and maritime transport sector and their contribution to the overall strategic plans of capital in the European Union to increase its profits.

Climate change is being used by capital to find a profitable way out into new areas of business. The only ones who will profit from this development are the corporate behemoths, while, on the contrary, the workers will see unemployment go through the roof and their labour and wage rights shattered and will pay even more heavily for transport.

Developments in the Member States of the European Union absolutely confirm our reading: depreciation of public transport in order to make it easier to sell it off to businessmen, who acquire profitable slices with ready-made infrastructures for which the workers have paid through the nose, a typical example being the sell-off of the Hellenic Railways, which compares to that of Olympic Airways in the past and similar plans by the PASOK government for urban public transport.

The liberalisation of transport, of freight, passenger and all types of transport, has brought about disastrous consequences for the workers: increased numbers of accidents, painful repercussions on public health and subsidy packages worth billions of euro for the monopoly business groups.

The abolition of cabotage under Regulation (EEC) No 3577/92 is having painful consequences on seamen and workers and on island dwellers. The monopoly shipping groups which run coastal passenger and car ferries, cruise ships and all categories of scheduled ships in general – and this is a very important point – are opting to register their ships under flags of convenience of Member States of the European Union and third countries, because that way, they can get cheaper labour and increase their profits.

At the same time, shipowners are building their ships in shipyards in Asia. The exploitation of the workers is causing a great deal of tension and their labour and insurance rights are being swept away. Thousands of

workers are being thrown into the Kaiada of unemployment by the thousand. In this way, cheaper labour can be selected, without vested wage rights. Ticket prices have risen astronomically, while the risks to passenger safety and human life have increased, due to the falling standard of services and the lack of any control or supervision of safety measures, which are seen as costs by capital and its profits.

The labour movement, the grassroots movement, is opposed to and is fighting against the European Union's deeply anti-grassroots policy, calling for the creation of a single public transport operator which will satisfy social and grassroots needs.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) The report we are debating on a sustainable future for transport describes the current fundamental problems of the transport sector and presents political ideas and recommendations on how these problems might be resolved in the best way.

We all agree that efficient and well-organised transport supports social life and helps to boost economic performance. There is therefore a real need for purposeful improvement in the quality and efficiency of all forms of transport, including road, rail, river, sea and air transport, while strictly respecting the essential principles of environmental protection.

The ever increasing demand and overload on road transport in urban areas is the cause of up to 40% of CO₂ and up to 70% of other harmful emissions from motor vehicles. The effective promotion of technologies with low CO₂ emissions in transport is therefore a natural move towards focusing on environmental protection.

However, the development of electric-powered vehicles requires an accelerated effort on the basic European Union normative and regulatory measures, which would definitively open the way to the mass use of electric power in transport. In my opinion, Commissioner, we all quite rightly see huge shortcomings here in the work of the European Union, which is not keeping pace in this area with present day needs, as Japanese companies are developing electric vehicles and intensively working on the standardisation and unification of regulations for this area.

Laurence J.A.J. Stassen (NI). – (NL) Mr President, the present report on a sustainable future for transport addresses the importance of the transport sector for the European economy and the completion of the internal market. At first glance, that might sound promising, were it not for the fact that the report unfortunately degenerates into a catalogue of figures related to the leftists' pet causes: environmental protection, CO₂ reduction, improvement of social and working conditions, you name it, it is there. Obviously, all of that has to be stage-managed from Europe. Consumers and companies will soon be saddled with the high costs of having to comply with the latest European requirements and these transport plans will ultimately be funded by European subsidies.

These ambitions will put paid to European economies. Even before the current recession, Europe was unable to keep pace with the growth figures of the United States, let alone with those of the emerging economies, such as India and China. Now, after the failure of the climate summit in Copenhagen, Europe is unilaterally making a desperate attempt to push back the use of fossil fuels. Another thing you can read in this report is that the further growth of air transport will depend on it being CO₂-neutral. How exactly do they think they are going to achieve that in practice? Are they going to introduce electric aeroplanes any time soon?

However much this report strives for financial and social welfare in Europe, it seems to be setting a course which will leave the European Union in an even weaker position, resulting in fewer jobs and a lower standard of welfare. There is no possibility of Europe actually achieving the aim it has set itself. Mr President, let us focus on the heart of the matter here and that is an economically profitable future for transport. If Member States wish to add a policy to that, then that is their own business, but please spare us an imposed European planned economy.

Joachim Zeller (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, firstly, I would like to thank Mr Grosch for his in-depth report and for the huge amount of work that he has put into it.

Without a functioning transport system, a Europe without frontiers that separate us will not be possible. In addition, the European economy cannot be successful and is not even conceivable without efficient, future-proof transport systems on land, on water and in the air. We need a stronger sense of community and less national egoism, in particular, when it comes to environmentally friendly rail transport.

In order to ensure that transport has a sustainable future, all the modes of transport must be prepared to take up the environmental and economic challenges faced by society as a whole. The report provides valuable pointers in this respect, which indicate the direction that we must move in.

There is only one point on which I do not agree with the report. Establishing a transport fund using cohesion policy money is not something that I can support. Why is that? It is true that transport promotes cohesion in Europe. However, a separate fund financed with cohesion policy money would not be able to fulfil the expectations that it would give rise to. It would also apply one-sided pressure on the Cohesion Fund and take too much responsibility away from the Member States, which are specifically required to ensure a sustainable future for transport.

We have just established a special committee in Parliament which will discuss what the European Union Cohesion and Structural Funds will look like in future and we should not prejudge this committee's work. Therefore, I am calling on you to vote in favour of the amendment to this report. In addition, I believe that in the context of sustainability and the future of transport systems, we should also give magnetic levitation technology a chance.

Magdalena Álvarez (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, before I get onto the content of the report, please allow me to thank Mr Grosch for including and accepting the majority of the amendments proposed by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

In my opinion, this has contributed to adequately setting out and orienting guidelines for future European transport policy.

I would highlight four major groups among the amendments accepted and included. The first refers to objectives. The inclusion of safety and territorial cohesion as priority objectives will doubtless improve the design of future transport policy and will contribute to making its practical application fit with the public's expectations, needs and possibilities.

Alongside safety, territorial cohesion has been incorporated as a priority objective, as I said. To this end, it is being proposed to make special efforts to improve cross-border conditions, reduce bottlenecks and solve interoperability problems, as well as improving links to the outermost regions; all of this is to be based on the real situation of each country and each mode of transport.

The second group of amendments of particular importance are those promoting two modes of transport: by rail, and by sea and waterway.

There is also a third group of amendments to which I would like to give particular emphasis, which is that relating to financing. Adequate financial cover is vital and vitally important, and to this end, we support the creation of a transport fund, a budgetary commitment in the financial perspectives, and a specific application of the golden rule.

Finally, I would like to mention the amendments that I consider important which relate to the need to strengthen the social aspect of transport. I am referring to the working conditions of workers and the rights of passengers.

I will conclude by once again thanking the rapporteur and the other groups for their cooperation, and for the high level of commitment to European transport.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the 2020 objectives for a sustainable future for urban transport and the transport of goods are ambitious: reducing, between 2010 and 2020, the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by road accidents by 40%; regarding road transport, doubling the number of bus and rail passengers by 2020; reducing CO₂ emissions caused by road transport through suitable innovations and avoiding empty runs; promoting rail transport; reducing electricity consumption by railway vehicles; reducing environmental pollution with regard to air transport; providing financial incentives, again by 2020, for the creation of multimodal connections, or platforms, for travel within the European Union, and increasing the number of these.

Of course, however, the first step is still a greater integration of modes of transport and the European Union must take decisive action when problems arise relating to the realisation of the major railway corridors or lines of communication.

Carlo Fidanza (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I join in the chorus of praise for the rapporteur, Mr Grosch, who has surely done a good job. I agree with most of the considerations that have already been expressed regarding comodality as an important aspect and on the issue of interoperability.

There are three things that I would like to underline quickly. The first regards the issue of safety: we need to continue to invest heavily in safety, which must certainly be carried out by developing ITS, as we already said in the preceding debate, and we must do it through further developing RTMS technology in the rail transport sector. Remaining with the rail transport sector, we must carry out the work with the courage to invest the European Railway Agency with greater powers in matters of safety in order to avoid the repetition of disasters such as those which we unfortunately experienced a few months ago.

Regarding financing, I am in favour of creating a transport fund. I believe that in the 2013 financial perspective, we must fight to see these policies adequately financed and ensure that the TEN networks may be developed further. In this regard, I believe it is fundamental that these networks be developed with the Mediterranean at their centre, as the Mediterranean is a point of connection with the new markets in the East.

Finally, the last issue I would like to touch on concerns urban mobility. I very much welcomed the call contained in the report and believe that on this issue, we should incentivise the use and coordination of good practices. We must work for a better management of goods transport in towns and cities in order to achieve a more sustainable urban transport system, and I believe that this report is a good premise for continuing an excellent job.

Knut Fleckenstein (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased that we will be able to adopt this report with a large majority tomorrow. There are two things that I regard as being particularly important. The first is ensuring that the objectives we have set ourselves for 2020 can be measured. We need measurable principles which will allow us to take stock after ten years or, even better, halfway through the period, so that we can identify whether we have achieved some of what we set out to do or whether things have not worked out and we need to make improvements. This applies in particular to CO₂ emissions in the transport sector. If all the other sectors are making good progress, as Mr Cramer has said, then we can rightly call on the transport industry to do the same. European transport policy is of particular importance when it comes to reducing CO₂ emissions.

The second point concerns the implementation of efficient comodality. For me, this is the key to a sensible EU transport strategy. I say this, because efficient comodality can have a number of different meanings. If we do not base this theoretical concept on the right criteria, which can be put into practice, we will not achieve our objective. Therefore, I am once again calling on the Commission to ensure that the concept is implemented correctly down to the last detail, which means developing useful intermodal nodes and removing the bottlenecks in the transport of goods to and from important European trade gateways. This particularly applies to the links between major ports and airports and their hinterlands.

My third point is that the proposed core Trans-European Network (TEN) must be based on the same criteria, so that there is an almost automatic modal shift towards an efficient and environmentally friendly European transport system. These are the factors that make up a sensible plan. Not just cost effectiveness, but also social compatibility, environmental protection and sustainability. Mr Grosch and Mrs Alvarez, thank you very much for all your hard work.

President. – The next item is the catch-the-eye procedure. I have 12 people who have applied for the floor. Strictly speaking, we should have only five in a debate but, because of the interest in this topic, we will try to take everybody for one minute each please.

Luis de Grandes Pascual (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, in my opinion, this excellent report sets out the guidelines that must inspire the new White Paper on Transport that will shape European transport policy for the next 10 years.

This report includes several issues that are worth outlining: the need for a financial fund as an essential instrument; the challenge of the growing demands of freight transport; the search for comodal solutions that make users and freight safe; the vital need for sufficient and secure rest areas for road transport; the – in my opinion, correct – diagnosis that the various modes of transport must complement each other, with efficiency criteria being sought rather than merely being in competition with each other; and the rapporteur's – brave, in my opinion, and fair – assertion that transport by rail or sea is not always more environmentally friendly than road transport.

In short, the concept of 'efficient comodality' is a concept for the future and it must certainly, in my opinion, be given full support.

Jan Kozłowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mr Kallas, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, who has produced an excellent piece of work which is of great importance for the final form of the future White Paper. I support the opinion that it is a crucial matter for the European Union to improve the efficiency of the transport system, but to make this objective a reality, strategic integration of EU instruments is essential. Cohesion policy, as a key instrument for accomplishment of the Europe 2020 strategy, should play a leading role in relation to sectoral policies, leading to full inclusion of all Member States in a European network and also supporting gradual introduction of smart solutions.

The European Union should have instruments at its disposal which support an increase in effectiveness of transport networks, including in relation to cross-border projects. However, the transport fund must not be established at the expense of resources earmarked for cohesion policy. We should strive for the simultaneous mutual strengthening of transport policy and cohesion policy, and not weaken existing instruments.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The report on a sustainable future for transport contains recommendations from Parliament both for the future White Paper on sustainable transport in the European Union and for the future TEN-T.

Given how densely populated the European Union is, it is vital for us to develop rail and maritime transport further. The European strategy for the development of inland waterway transport and the development of rail freight corridors and high-speed railway lines for connecting all of Europe's capitals and large cities must become priorities for the European Union. I hope that the future TEN-T network will make greater use of access to the Black Sea and the Rhine-Main-Danube corridor.

Markets in the transport sector should only be opened up for the benefit of consumers, which should be accompanied by long-term plans for infrastructure investment and consolidation of technical interoperability.

The funding for the development of Europe's transport system should take into account transport safety, as well as social, economic and territorial cohesion.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the rapporteur and also to all of the shadow rapporteurs. I believe that we have succeeded in resolving what seemed almost to be a contradiction, because we are all calling for the development of our transport systems, but also for a sustainable future.

This report establishes the requirements for a genuinely sustainable future. I only hope that we can work together to implement these requirements in such a way that they can be experienced on the ground.

I should like to give just one example of what we are currently attempting to achieve in Austria. We have recently established the *Niederösterreich mobil* platform in Lower Austria. This aims to bring together all the interest groups and all the bodies that are affected to develop sustainable local mobility systems for the future. I believe that we need examples like this on a small scale, but we also need large models on a European level.

We must extend our transport networks, in particular, the rail and water networks. I would like to emphasise with regard to the Danube strategy that, while we need to develop the Danube, we must also and most importantly take into consideration the fact that it is a particularly sensitive ecosystem.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, this has really been an afternoon devoted to transport and this is the report which basically summarises everything.

Many people say that the greatest achievement made on behalf of the citizens of Europe is the internal market. As Mr Kallas has said, the transport routes are the arteries of the internal market. Therefore, it is, of course, important to ensure that these transport routes are safe, that they are developed in an environmentally friendly way, and that we take a general look at what can be improved in future using intelligent transport systems, for example.

We must think about how we can structure the more environmentally friendly areas, such as rail and sea transport, in a more effective way, how we can move more transport away from the roads and into these areas, and how we can reduce the environmental impact of the emissions from sea transport. At the same time, we must also consider how to meet the specific needs of urban transport, which are very different from those of international transport. The future of urban transport may lie with managers who travel on e-bikes

that also provide them with exercise. Of course, we need quite different options over longer distances, which would also fulfil a cross-border function. This is a good and very forward-looking report.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, transport is a fundamental element of economic development. It is essential to territorial cohesion, social progress and increasing public well-being. As a result of its strategic relevance and its unequivocal public interest, the sector is, and must continue to be, one of the areas in which states perform their social role through public services. That is what is required for a modern and efficient transport system that is capable of responding to major challenges in the sector, such as increased safety and reducing its environmental impact, amongst others.

We must correct and reverse persistent policies of failure to invest in and dismantling of the public transport sector, with a view to its privatisation. We must respect and value the rights of the workers in the sector. We must invest in research and development, as well as in essential public infrastructure to ensure the sector responds to society's needs.

For all these reasons, in several Member States such as Portugal, workers and the people have been stoutly and determinedly fighting to protect the public transport sector and save it from privatisation. We welcome this fight, and would associate ourselves with it.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President, against the background of this comprehensive discussion, I should like to make a suggestion in advance which would reduce some of our transport problems.

Millions of EU citizens are currently making their way to holiday destinations on the roads of Europe. With the aim of making transport more sustainable, would it not be sensible to stagger the holiday periods of Member States at a European level and coordinate them with one another?

National holidays often have a serious impact on holiday travel within Europe. The European transport network comes under extreme pressure, people sit for hours in traffic jams on their way to their holiday destinations and the negative consequences of these seasonal peaks for the environment and for citizens and consumers are obvious. Staggered holiday periods, which would, of course, have to take into account the educational requirements of the individual states, could help to resolve some of these problems. This would also bring economic benefits, as extending the holiday season would result in cheaper prices and the creation of more jobs.

I hope that the Commission will take up this suggestion.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, what a nice idea it would be if we could stagger holidays for this Parliament, but I do not think that is going to happen.

I listened to colleagues who mentioned bicycles. May I say that I purchased a new bike last week. It is very sustainable, but it is entirely impractical for the job I do. What we need are very practical, sustainable transport solutions. Can I also add that there has – rightly – been a lot of talk about urban transportation and the need to have systems that link together, but let us not forget the numbers of people who live in isolated rural communities, where rural transport schemes on a small scale mean that they can get involved in the wider society. So there is both a social and an economic dimension to transport which we have to take into account. Yes, of course, we need to address the environmental issues, and I believe that will be done, through technology and through pressure on climate change. On the issue of a transport fund, I would regret any attempt to rob Peter to pay Paul. Our big battle is to secure an adequate budget for the European Union in its entirety post 2013. It is going to be tough.

IN THE CHAIR: LIBOR ROUČEK

Vice-President

Olga Sehnalová (S&D). – (CS) The future of transport surely includes development and support for public transport as well. The target of doubling the numbers of users by 2020 is a step in the right direction. However, there is a question mark over how this sector will be affected by the economic crisis and the policy of budget cuts in the long term.

The new Member States in particular are now facing enormous social pressure from individual car use, with all of its negative consequences, including higher CO₂ emissions and traffic accidents. Local and regional authorities in particular are facing pressure to cut public transport, and it should be a European priority to maintain it before irreversible damage is done. Now more than ever before, it should be an important objective

of every European transport policy to find a way of supporting public transport operations efficiently and effectively.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the transport sector is a fundamental element of the development of the Union and its regions. It plays a key role in the economy and employment. It enables the free movement of EU citizens and the flow of goods throughout Europe. It also has a direct influence on the development and social cohesion of regions and on the citizens' quality of life and their health and security.

It is extremely important to reduce CO₂ emissions in road transport by using appropriate innovations. Some passenger and freight transport should be transferred from road to rail or ship in order to reduce the excessive traffic burden on existing roads. We should develop modern forms of public transport in urban areas. It is important that different means of transport do not compete with each other in an artificial way, but that they mutually support and complement each other, creating a sustainable transport system. Transport policy should be more effective and efficient.

Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D). – (PL) We have had here, today, the opportunity for a very interesting debate on the future of transport. This debate is taking place at the same time as another discussion is being held here – also in Parliament – about the budget for the years 2014-2020. I would like to ask this: in the budget for the next six years, should we not provide more resources for transport and, in particular, should the next few years not be years of particular effort as far as rail transport is concerned? For all of us here think it is this form of transport which should relieve the roads. It is a very environmentally friendly means of transport, but at this point, just talking about it will not suffice. Significantly greater resources should be provided for these objectives in the next six-year period.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I, too, would congratulate Mr Grosch, especially on his sensitivity regarding the European transport network's border crossings. I would also like to thank my colleague, Mrs Álvarez, for having drawn up such a relevant and balanced report.

Please allow me just to mention two small things that are not in the report, but could be in the Commission White Paper tomorrow. Firstly, I would express my disappointment that the 40% reduction in the number of deaths is being kept. I know that the matter of serious injuries is being added, but I think that we will, naturally, have to offer a very good explanation for why we are not being more ambitious and setting a target of 50% or even higher, as our goal is to reduce the number of deaths on the road by 100%.

As regards the financing of networks, I would simply like to add that in addition to the proposals in Mr Grosch's report, which I think are extremely interesting, we should be as ambitious as possible now, with the debate on the coming financial perspectives starting. Why not consider, and I am talking to you in particular, Mr Kallas, guaranteeing an objective of 10% of the next multiannual budget, 2014-2020, for Europe's transport networks? Why not dream? Why dismiss things out of hand?

Let us go further, because perhaps we will manage what we did not manage in previous financial perspectives.

Hella Ranner (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, this own-initiative report allows the European Parliament to set clear goals for the development of the transport sector. This is important because transport will enable us to achieve and maintain a well functioning economy and a competitive Europe.

All of us, including Mr Kallas, know that the important feature of such ambitious and capital intensive plans is, naturally, the funding and we are looking forward to seeing new funding models, which will certainly be needed. A transport fund will and could play a particularly important role in this respect, not by taking money away from other areas, but by coordinating the huge flows of finance more effectively.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, this has been an interesting discussion. It is clear that we are facing a very challenging task in getting the priorities right for the transport sector over the next decade while ensuring that due account is given to different aspects, sometimes of a very controversial nature.

You have already signalled all these controversial issues during today's debate, and they are very well known with regard to railways. At the last part-session, you had an interesting and controversial debate about competitive rail-freight corridors, which can be a very important development.

Let us work together to push necessary railway reforms. Railway competitiveness versus road transport and also versus the global competitiveness of Europe depends very much on the internal architecture of our

railways: getting rid of privileges, getting rid of political interference and all these things. It is my strong conviction after my short period in this job.

Is transport cohesion also cohesion or not? Electric vehicles: what is the contribution of electric vehicles to congestion, which is the most detested feature in transport? Finances are always controversial, especially today. Then there are regional interests, already signalled here; the interests of the Mediterranean area.

So let us work together and try to find the right balance. I believe that we can all agree on the general goals. Tackling the future challenges of the transport system requires satisfying the mobility needs of citizens and businesses in a way that uses less and cleaner energy and exploits more efficiently the infrastructure and the potential of each mode. In this framework, I am confident that cooperation between all European institutions will result and bring the benefit of a high quality future transport system.

Mathieu Grosch, rapporteur. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your contributions. We have set ourselves objectives in this report and much is needed in order to achieve them, including funding.

Therefore, I would like to make it quite clear at this point that it is not our intention to rob Peter to pay Paul. However, it would be a pity if Peter were very rich and Paul really needed the money to invest it where it is required. It is hard to image two areas which are more compatible than mobility and territorial cohesion. We must not see them as being in competition with one another, as some people do. For example, this is even the case in an amendment submitted by my group. Instead, we should regard them as working together. That is also the fundamental concept of cohesion, as we understand it.

Therefore, I would like to call on you specifically not to support this amendment, because the fund will play a key role in our report, in the future, and also in transport policy. We need money not only to improve the infrastructure, but also for research, which will result in increased safety and improved technology.

Since we know that in the rail sector, for example, there are seven or eight completely different systems in operation, while on the roads, it is possible to travel throughout Europe from north to south and from east to west without technological problems, I believe that it is completely acceptable to invest this money in research, interoperability and technology, precisely in order to allow the regions to move closer together.

As far as the agencies are concerned, and I would like to refer to this again briefly, we feel strongly that we must not create a new structure, but we must give Europe a central role. In transport policy and in other areas, it is becoming clear that Europe is, in many cases, the solution and not the problem, as many people who view the situation with a slight tinge of national autonomy would like to claim. That is what we want to achieve with the agencies and with the report. I would like to thank you all for your very positive contributions.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Tuesday, 6 July 2010).

Written statements (Rule 149)

Spyros Danellis (S&D), in writing. – (EL) The preparation of the next White Paper on transport is a turning point, giving us the opportunity to rethink the transport policy guidelines and, hence, the 'hard infrastructure' of the EU common market. Already in its present form, the Grosch report provides a global view of the future of transport, a view which starts from the premise that the efficiency of the transport system is not determined solely by the size of our road networks or by the volume of freight carried by our ships and trains; it is also determined – and this is a basic and non-negotiable principle – by the impact of these activities on the environment, on society, on labour and on public safety. That is why I believe that it is especially important to give new momentum to road safety – not forgetting that 70% of transport in the EU is by road – and I also believe that the proposal to set up a European Agency for Road Transport is a substantial measure in that direction. We need new tools to promote the adoption of new technologies and disseminate best regulatory measures and research tools for road transport.

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, the Grosch report, which we have debated today, plays an unquestionably important role in drafting the future of European transport for the next 10 years. The exceptional number of discrepancies and the problem with working out a mutual compromise are the result of the diverse nature of transport in European states and the complicated social and geopolitical situation in the European Union.

I would like to draw attention to several matters contained in the document, including the fact that we point to the need for diversification in transport when establishing the European transport space. In my opinion, the broadly understood concept of decarbonisation is a great threat. I would like to emphasise that to achieve decarbonisation, it is necessary to undertake sizeable investments in new technologies. In addition, we must not neglect sources of energy which are reasonably environmentally friendly, such as biofuels. I come from Silesia, from a conurbation which, like many similar areas in Europe, needs more than just regional support. This explains my emphasis on urban space. In order to add weight to the report, I suggested including references to additional documents such as the Freight Logistics Action Plan and the second report on monitoring development of the rail market and, in so doing, we stressed the significance of railways as strategically important for guaranteeing the correct functioning of the transport sector as a whole.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D), in writing. – (IT) The report on the future of transport aims to support and develop an efficient and sustainable transport system in Europe. In order for this to come about, it is necessary that the internal transport market is fully completed and that all obstacles resulting from the late, or lack of, transposition of EU legislation in the Member States are removed.

A transport fund will also be necessary in order to guarantee financing of the trans-European transport network projects and the systems to support the network. The TEN-T projects are a priority for transport policy, but the problem of missing infrastructure must be removed, as well as the geographical and historical obstacles of cross-border routes. Lastly, the issue of road safety – among other things – is one of the key points upon which the transport policy should be based in future.

19. Annual report of the Petitions Committee 2009 (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo, on behalf of the Committee on Petitions, on the annual report on the activities of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2009 (2009/2139(INI)) (A7-0186/2010).

Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo, rapporteur. – (ES) Mr President, it is my pleasure to come here, as we do every year, to present the annual report on the activities of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2009.

As you know, this year, the activity of the Committee on Petitions was marked by the change from the sixth to the seventh parliamentary term, which has meant significant alterations to the composition of the committee, since two thirds of its members are involved for the first time.

The report aims to offer a clear vision of the activity of the Committee on Petitions during the year and, ultimately, a more specific explanation of what submitting a petition to the European Parliament involves, as well as the possible result of the process, what it can achieve and its limitations. This report also examines the progress made in applying previous recommendations whose objective was to improve the committee's work, and highlights the main challenges for the future in light of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, as well as confirming the right to petition the European Parliament as one of the pillars of European citizenship, has also established the necessary bases for increasing public participation in the European Union's decision-making process, offering Europeans the opportunity to suggest improvements or additions to the Union's legislation. To this end, the Committee on Petitions welcomes the fact that it is able, under Rule 50 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, to work alongside the Committee on Constitutional Affairs on drawing up the report on the European Citizens' Initiative, which should be finished late this year. Moreover, following the same context of the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament's Committee on Petitions should forge closer working links with similar committees in Member States' national and regional parliaments in order to promote mutual understanding of petitions on European issues and to ensure the swiftest response to members of the public at the most appropriate level.

I would also draw your attention to the legally binding force acquired by the Charter of Fundamental Rights with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, and underline the importance of the Charter in making fundamental rights clearer and more visible to all Europeans. I trust that all necessary procedural steps will be taken to ensure that the institutional aspects of EU accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms will be taken. This goal is of vital importance if we take into account the problem of violations of property rights that the Committee on Petitions faces in certain Member States on a daily basis, knowing that neither the committee nor Parliament is in a position to take any legal action.

I would also stress the excellent relations that Parliament has with the European Ombudsman. We particularly appreciate the efforts of the European Ombudsman to raise public awareness of its work, as well as to identify and resolve cases of maladministration by the European institutions. To this end, we support the idea that the European Ombudsman should establish an administrative code of conduct for the European Union administration.

We call for the development of an online system that clearly indicates the various complaints mechanisms available to the public and which of these is most appropriate to their interests; the establishment of an online one-stop shop would be needed in order to achieve this.

However, not everything was going to be positive. I would like to take this opportunity to protest at the practice – which has been constant since 2007 – of the Directorate-General for the Presidency and the Directorate-General for Communication, whereby items that are not petitions are registered as petitions, according to Rule 201(1) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure. I am talking about the so-called 'non-petitions'. Processing them is an unnecessary waste of time, on top of the cost of dedicating staff to this. In order for you to realise the importance of this point, I will give you one figure: these so-called 'non-petitions' are up to 25% of the petitions registered. The practice of such maladministration endangers the rights of EU citizens.

Finally, but no less important because of that, I would point out the need to adopt a code of conduct for the internal processing of petitions. To this end, I would encourage the secretariat and the representatives of the political groups to work on drawing up a revised guide for the benefit of Members on the internal regulations and procedures of the Committee on Petitions.

In conclusion, my final words – and how could it be any other way, Mr President – are of thanks to the committee's secretariat for its work and support in drawing up this report.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, firstly I would like to thank Mr Iturgaiz for his excellent report and for the very important work that has obviously gone into preparing it. I must say that, in the quality of his report, he went even further than his predecessor on this file, Ms McGuinness, who also succeeded in producing a very important and very informative report.

After studying this report, the Commission found many very important details and many suggestions concerning our better work and cooperation in the future. It is very clear that we have to recognise the growing importance of petitions. We can see that the number and range of issues covered by petitions are really increasing. I would also like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the new Chair of the Committee on Petitions, Ms Mazzoni, because she has managed, in a very short time, to bring new energy and impetus into the work of the committee and into the handling of the Commission, and is establishing very collaborative and good cooperation with other committees in Parliament and with the Commission as well.

I would like to continue by reiterating that the Commission is, of course, very ready to cooperate with the Committee on Petitions in all aspects relating to petitions. We are ready to provide expert help and to offer what is very important – the background study of the issues and a good exchange of information on the most pertinent issues. Because of the time limitation, allow me to focus only on three points that, from the Commission's point of view, are very interesting and very important.

We consider the most important point to be the recognition by the rapporteur of the very important part in this whole cooperation played by cooperation with the national authorities and the national parliaments. I listened very carefully just now to his ideas on establishing very close collaboration with the petition committees in the Member States. It is very often true that, where European legislation is concerned, the national authorities are responsible for enforcing it.

Secondly, I understand your call for more readability and more user friendliness in relation to the information spread and information communication from the Commission. Here, we are trying to improve our work and I would underline the quality of the new Europa website where we are trying to direct petitioners to the relevant information.

My third point is that I am very pleased that last week, we managed to conclude the framework agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission on the particular issue that was raised in the report, namely, the information on stakeholders' current powers as regards infringement. I am very glad that we have found a solution for that.

I know that my time is up so I will finish here. I am looking forward to our debate. Thank you very much for an excellent report.

Pascale Gruny, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to congratulate Mr Iturgaiz Angulo on his work.

I agree with the content of the report, and do not wish to return to that particular subject. However, I would like to stress two important issues raised by Mr Iturgaiz Angulo. First of all, it is important to inform the citizens of the difference between the citizens' initiative, the process of submitting a petition to the European Parliament, and the role of the European Ombudsman. There is still too much confusion regarding the role of each instrument. Secondly, when I go to meet citizens in my constituency, I realise that they have never heard of the right to submit a petition to the European Parliament. How can we ensure that the citizens have a clearer picture and that they are able to mobilise existing resources to their advantage? In view of this, it is vitally important for the European Parliament to possess better communication tools.

Are you aware that no website currently exists to clearly explain how to submit a petition? By the same token, there is no information available to people submitting petitions which would allow them to follow, in real time, the progress of their petitions to Parliament. There is no good reason for this lack of transparency.

A greater level of visibility is needed so that the citizens become aware of the fact that we are there to support them. Our committee exists and works for their benefit, and we are there to listen to them. The European Parliament must do everything within its power to close this communication gap and to highlight the work that has been carried out. This work is not of a legislative nature, that is true, but it is no less important. The citizens should be our main concern, and our committee works towards this objective each and every day.

Chrysoula Paliadeli, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, I, too, should like to take my turn, as vice-chair of the Committee on Petitions, in expressing my thanks to my good friend, Mr Iturgaiz, for the very important report which he has drafted, especially as, having evaluated the statistics, he highlights the crucial role of the Committee on Petitions in contacts between European citizens and the European Parliament and, alongside the institution of the European Ombudsman, in building up their trust in the European Union and its representatives.

From this point of view, the Commission has an obligation, and I welcome the fact that Mr Šefčovič has already said so (he beat me to it), to cooperate with the members of the Committee on Petitions in reducing the bureaucratic mentality and in helping the Commission to respond more efficiently to requests which facilitate the work of the Committee on Petitions, in giving it regular official progress reports on infringement proceedings and in creating a new web portal to inform citizens of the various complaint mechanisms at their disposal at EU and national level.

I trust that the Commission will give Mr Iturgaiz's report due attention and make use of its conclusions, in a bid to achieve a European identity and build up cohesion.

Marian Harkin, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, first of all, I want to thank the rapporteur for his very comprehensive report.

I have been a substitute member of the Committee on Petitions for six years and during that time, I have worked very closely with some petitioners and listened very carefully to others.

The first thing that always concerns me is that, in general, citizens have a very different perspective on the EU institutions than we do as MEPs or you do as Commissioner. I think we need to put ourselves in the shoes of petitioners. I think if we want a really effective, citizen friendly process, we need to set up some kind of panel composed of petitioners and then listen to what they have to say and use that as a catalyst for positive change.

For many citizens, petitioning the European Parliament is the last lap of a very long journey and they are often already very frustrated. We have a responsibility to smooth that path as much as possible and indeed, the proposal to convert the EU rights web page into a user friendly, one-stop shop is, I think, an excellent one. But we also need to be supportive of citizens throughout the process, with clear, timely explanations as to what is happening throughout the entire procedure.

The issue of inadmissible petitions comes up year after year and I think we need to be real about this. We are never going to fully explain to citizens what the competences of the Union are or are not, so I think what is more important is that, if a petition is inadmissible, then that is clearly and simply explained to the petitioner and, crucially, suggestions as to where they might turn next are also included in the response.

Two final points. I support paragraph 17, which calls on the Commission to deal with misleading directory companies. Year in, year out, small businesses in many, if not all, Member States are subject to harassment and legal threats from these misleading directory companies.

Finally, recital E speaks about the direct impact of EU legislation on citizens' lives and how citizens are best placed to assess its effectiveness and shortcomings. We as legislators, and the Commissioners as initiators of legislation, need to listen to this and use it as part of a reinforcing loop that improves our effectiveness rather than a cul-de-sac.

Margrete Auken, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DA) Mr President, I, too, would like to thank Mr Iturgaiz for an important report, which contains many splendid paragraphs. As I only have a short time in which to speak, I will concentrate on the amendments that we have tabled.

We ought to be specific in what we say if citizens are to understand what our work involves. It is not a question of placing the blame on anyone; on the contrary, our work has borne fruit. The local and national authorities have listened to us. It is a misconstrued sense of politeness to only talk in completely abstract terms on these matters, and it counteracts the good intentions of many of my fellow Members to make our work more citizen friendly.

With Amendment 1, we want to make it clear that, naturally, the EU court stands above national courts. In the report, you could get the impression that national courts have the final word. However, citizens can, of course, bring cases to us, including outside of the domestic courts. Otherwise, it will be almost impossible, not least for financial reasons, for most people to have their complaints heard.

Amendment 4 is probably the one that I feel is most important. We do not want to give the Commission the opportunity to avoid its responsibility for Member States' compliance with Community legislation. It is great to come up with new methods, but from the Commissioner's comments, I could not tell whether this was possibly an attempt by the Commission to escape its obligations, and that is something it must not be allowed to do.

Finally a few words about our Amendment 5 on the internal rules and working methods in the Committee on Petitions, which will hardly concern plenary at all. Very briefly, the current rules and methods work extremely well, and remember: if it ain't broke, don't fix it! We have already wasted too much precious time on this debate.

Zbigniew Ziobro, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, at the outset, I, too, would like to thank the rapporteur for his work.

I would like to point out that the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is going to have a fundamental influence on the work of the Committee, although adapting the Committee's work to the new requirements of the treaty is a goal which will require further effort. We find ourselves in a new situation in which Parliament should play a substantial role, particularly in work on the new citizens' initiative, so that this instrument can achieve its objective as part of the decision-making process in the European Union. The Committee on Petitions plays a major role in implementation of Parliament's supervisory powers. It is worth recalling, for example, complaints about the way the German youth services make it difficult for parents from a Member State other than Germany to exercise their parental rights. This problem was examined by the committee, which drew attention to irregularities in this area.

The Committee on Petitions also plays an important role in monitoring the work of the European Commission. We can mention, as an example, the report on preparations related to the Nord Stream investment and the suspicion which has arisen that the project does not comply with all environmental requirements.

The third significant factor which should be mentioned in the context of discussions about the work of the Committee on Petitions is that of making the Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding. This, too, is going to be the subject of further intensive work on the part of the Committee.

Willy Meyer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (ES) Mr President, on behalf of my group, I would also like to join in congratulating and thanking Mr Iturgaiz. I believe that we are looking at a detailed report on the intensive work that the Commission did in 2009.

That intensive work related to petitions, which are becoming an increasingly effective instrument for the public, meaning that the total number of petitions has actually increased in relation to 2008. I believe that

this indicates that the public really views Parliament as a very useful tool when it comes to presenting it with all types of petitions: environmental problems, fundamental rights, justice, the internal market, etc.

More and more petitions: top of the list are Germany, Spain, Italy and Romania; I hope that it bears no relation to the result of the match the day after tomorrow and that Germany will not be above Spain. However, it is true that we are looking at an instrument that is truly useful to the public.

I believe that the report has the virtue, not just of describing issues that need resolution for the sake of the effectiveness of the petition procedure, but also of pointing them out to the European Commission.

Firstly, simplifying petitioning falls to all of us, including this House. Nevertheless, regarding everything relating to EU competences, such as management of the ecosystem, the environment, etc., we would need to make the Commission's responses relating to this procedure much faster, including the warning letters to Member States. They need to be faster because, as the Commission knows, when the letter arrives or even when the Court of Justice of the European Union intervenes, it is often too late: the damage is irreversible; the environmental damage is irreversible.

That is why it seems very important to me that we should actually be able to find a much faster response on this specific issue. This response must be much faster from when the petition arrives and from when the Commission pronounces its agreement that harm has been done or that the European directives on environmental protection are being violated, in order for this procedure, when it does reach the courts, to get there much faster to seek to prevent the damage being irreversible.

That is the experience that we had in 2009: it was a year with very important repercussions for my country, Spain. Spain has been one of the countries most affected by uncontrolled urban development, so Mrs Auken's report was very important at the time. I would remind you, for example, of the port of Granadilla.

Our recent visit to Huelva regarding all the results of pollution in the estuary demonstrates that it is indeed a very useful instrument. I believe that the public will thank us if we can speed up and simplify the Commission's actions, as well as making them have much more effect when there are breaches of environmental regulations.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the right of petition is enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon as an important component of citizenship of the union. German and Spanish citizens submit by far the largest number of petitions. My home country, Austria, is well behind the leaders. I am certain that broad public awareness can have a positive impact on the increasing integration of the European Union.

The decisions made by the European Union have a direct influence on the daily lives of citizens. Petitions allow citizens to have direct contact with European institutions and these institutions are often seen as being very abstract and bureaucratic.

However, the institutions also benefit from these petitions, because petitions often highlight the way in which European Union law is implemented. One example of this is the mutual recognition of educational and professional qualifications and of professional experience. The EU supports a range of different mobility programmes. Mutual recognition is important in order to ensure that these programmes function successfully.

The citizens of the European Union are represented in the European Parliament. For this reason alone, it is important for them to be able to approach us directly by means of petitions. As a member of the Committee on Petitions, I am also working actively towards achieving greater public awareness of the committee and improving its efficiency. If the citizens of Europe knew more about the powers of the EU, it would be possible to resolve the problem of the large number of invalid petitions.

Last but not least, I would also like to thank the rapporteur for the report.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I greet Mr Šefčovič and point out the absence of the Council's representative for this debate.

As you know, Mr President, the European Union has been reinforcing the concept of European citizenship over the years, as this is fundamental to its political legitimacy and, above all, to cultivate its ambition of democratic representation. As in all international bodies, the European Union cannot take actions outside treaty law, nor can it make extensive interpretations of its powers.

And yet it has a particular character, which it derives from the European dream of its founders, who attributed it the character of being 'of the people'. In particular, the latest treaty, the Treaty of Lisbon – which has recently come into force – places the European institutions in a political framework, with the aim of greater participation on the part of the citizens: the building blocks of the Europe of the peoples that we are creating.

The European Parliament's Committee on Petitions is the only direct instrument for the active participation of citizens in the life of the European institutions. Suffice it to say that the committee bases its agenda on the requests of citizens and not on the instructions of the Commission. Parliament and the Commission ought to take greater notice of its work and results.

The data from the 2009 report – on which I congratulate Mr Iturgaiz Angulo – show a highly appreciable increase in participation despite the reluctance to work with the Committee on Petitions that the European Commission has undoubtedly shown in the past.

Over the last year, we have improved internal procedures, begun a review of the method for examining petitions received and have proposed, as all have mentioned, a system to modernise the web portal in order to make it more user friendly for citizens. It has been a fruitful year ...

(The President interrupted the speaker)

I would like to end with a wish for the next year: I am hoping for a more fruitful cooperation with the Commission and hence, I share in the words of Mr Šefčovič and his three points, which I hope shall be enacted. Further, I hope that this committee can have a specific role in the procedure which is under discussion for the citizens' initiative.

Kinga Göncz (S&D). – (HU) I, too, would like to offer my congratulations on this report. I think it provides accurate information on 2009, which was a difficult year. About two-thirds of the members of the Committee on Petitions were replaced, while the number of petitions grew, even if this increase was relatively low. 2009 was also exciting because the European Union attempted to reduce the democratic deficit by having the Treaty of Lisbon ratified and put into effect.

It is true that the Committee on Petitions is not involved in the legislative process and therefore, many consider it to be less important than other committees. However, it has a major role in reducing the democratic deficit by establishing a relationship between citizens and EU institutions. It is important feedback for us that the number of petitions submitted showed a slight increase. However, the number of petitions that could not be accepted did not drop by much. The provision of information should be improved to let citizens know in which cases they can petition the committee.

I believe that the actual areas which give rise to petitions also represent further important feedback for us all. These are generally the areas where the transposition of EU legislation is not carried out properly or is not implemented sufficiently, or where citizens want stronger European competence, such as in environmental protection and human rights. There is an increasing number of petitions related to free movement, the judiciary and the internal market. I believe they are all very important.

I would also like to stress that the committee must establish close cooperation with the European Commission, particularly with Commissioner Šefčovič. The committee would be much less efficient without his help. I think it is crucial to ensure that decisions are taken quickly in certain areas where irreparable damage may occur if we do not act with sufficient speed. The time factor is very important for many other reasons as well, and this is why the cooperation of the Commission is crucial. I would like to mention one more thing. We cannot process petitions equally fast in all languages. The committee's administrative staff does not have sufficient personnel who speak minor languages. Improvements are needed in this area, too, and procedures in minor languages should be accelerated.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, the right of petition is one of the most important rights of citizens of the European Union. It allows them to highlight possible violations of their rights or abuses within the European Union. Therefore, the petitions that are submitted are a good indicator of the way in which the European legal system is working. For this reason, I am pleased that a total of 1 900 petitions were submitted, which represents an increase over 2008.

However, the citizens of Europe also have the right to receive appropriate, adequate and rapid responses. This means that we must together improve the way in which we work and our internal procedures. First of all, the so-called non-petitions must be filtered out more quickly. They should not form part of the comprehensive official business process. Secondly, we must reject or pass on more rapidly the petitions that

we are not responsible for. Thirdly, the members of the Committee on Petitions should establish a dialogue with the petitioners more quickly.

There is a significant opportunity for the Committee on Petitions to bring the European Union to life for its citizens. I think that we, and by 'we' I mean the Committee on Petitions, the Commission and the relevant administrative body, should make extensive and appropriate use of this opportunity in the near future.

Many thanks once again to the rapporteur for his excellent report.

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) I, too, would like to start by congratulating my colleague, Mr Iturgaiz, for his report. His report is important because it is being issued by an important committee, and the Committee on Petitions is important because it is the bridge between us and European citizens. The positive fact about the committee is that not only does it give citizens the opportunity to have their say; it also ensures they are heard – which is possibly more important. There are few places where citizens feel they are truly being listened to, and this Committee is certainly one of them.

I would like to allude to a report I had prepared at the end of 2006 on behalf of the Committee on Petitions about misleading commercial directories: commercial directories which encourage citizens and also small businesses to advertise in them without knowing that this would be a paid advert. Entities such as organisations, schools and libraries, which are not even businesses, are falling victim to these commercial directories. In this report, I asked the Commission to bring forward a legislative proposal which would solve this issue once and for all. Unfortunately, this has not materialised, and I will keep insisting that it should be done. I therefore ask the Commissioner to take note of this, since I feel it is most important.

Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the report shows very clearly just how important the Committee on Petitions and the whole system of petitions are to European democracy. It is there that we react to the everyday problems which people face, but something else which is very important is that the citizens tell us when European law is not being kept by institutions in Member States or by the Member States themselves. In the Committee on Petitions, we discuss these matters and reach conclusions about them, but afterwards, we have no idea if the Member States have taken note of our findings.

Therefore, we do not have any real mechanisms for monitoring whether our work has produced any effect, or if our findings have been listened to and taken into account. In addition, it is difficult to perform monitoring functions if there is no follow-up and if we do not know what happens subsequently. Furthermore, it then happens that certain petitions start to come back to us and the complaints begin to be repeated.

One such example is a petition from 2006, which has just reached us again in 2010, and we are going to consider it once more. The author was opposed to construction of the gas pipeline at the bottom of the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany, and pointed out the risks it carried for the natural environment. In 2008, the European Parliament adopted a report in which it called for construction of the Northern Gas pipeline on the Baltic seabed to be halted. Our committee insisted that the European Commission check if the assessment of the whole situation had been carried out thoroughly and if the European Commission had supervised the matter. It turns out that no monitoring was carried out, and the matter has come back to us again. So we need to think carefully and create a system for monitoring what happens to petitions once we have finished with them.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur. I want to use my time to bring to the attention of the House an update on the work of the Committee on Petitions dating back to 2006 and 2007, when we set up a committee of inquiry into Equitable Life. I chaired that committee. This House voted on a report in 2007 which called on the UK Government to recognise its responsibility and to compensate Equitable Life policy holders in the UK, Ireland, Germany and elsewhere. Today, many of you may have received representations from your constituents who are concerned about the extent of this compensation. There is a suggestion that compensation will only amount to about 20%. This is not what the committee I chaired had in mind. I would like this House and the Commission in particular to look very carefully at this. I believe the new UK Government should honour what it said in its opening statement and commit to compensating all policy holders in an appropriate and fair manner.

Sonia Alfano (ALDE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the right to petition is one of the main instruments available to European citizens for active participation in the political activities of the European Union.

In approaching my mandate as an MEP in the spirit of service and respect for the citizen, and the priority that this must have in the decisions of the European Parliament, I have often taken an interest in the petitions submitted ...

(The President asked the speaker to speak more slowly)

I have often taken an interest in the petitions submitted and in their progress in the relevant committee. Unfortunately, despite the fact that Parliament's Rules of Procedure stipulated, in Rule 5(3), that Members shall be entitled to inspect any files held by Parliament or a committee, I have discovered that the internal *e-Petition* database is only accessible to members of the relevant committee. I contacted the committee in question but, unfortunately, did not receive a response.

I think that this discrimination, which reduces the importance of citizen's petitions and undermines the work of the parliamentary committee, ought to be redressed immediately. We have little time, Mr President, so we try to say everything in one minute.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) I would first of all like to congratulate Mr Iturgaiz for all his efforts on this report.

The Treaty of Lisbon has reconfirmed the fundamental right of the European Union's citizens to submit petitions to the European Parliament. However, these petitions must specifically come under one of the EU's areas of activity so that they can be dealt with.

This is why I have tabled an amendment to request that the future interactive petitions portal describes in as much detail as possible the EU's responsibilities in various areas. This is the only way of eliminating the confusion between EU competences and national competences and of reducing the number of petitions declared inadmissible.

I believe that in future, the Commission must cooperate on an ongoing basis with the European Ombudsman to avoid special reports being compiled, such as the one for complaint 676 submitted in 2008.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, my congratulations go to Mr Iturgaiz Angulo for an extremely informative report. I am not a member of the committee, but this report gives an excellent picture of its work and also of the usefulness of the petition procedure.

The petition procedure is useful, even if it is something with which the public is fairly unfamiliar. There is still quite a lot of work to do in this area. There will be work to do even after the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force and this new citizens' initiative is introduced. When its rules are being discussed, we will need to refer to the work of the Committee on Petitions and not try to reinvent the wheel. On the other hand, the public must also be informed as broadly as possible that a petition is different from a citizens' initiative.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the report is interesting, as is the work of the committee. Recently, and particularly during the last parliamentary term, the committee has been very much popularised by certain reports, but also interesting are the conclusions of the rapporteur, among which I would like to highlight the necessity for better cooperation with national parliaments, and also the accessibility of information for citizens. I am in full agreement here with Mrs Gruny that we should put more effort into popularising the role of petitions, the work of the Ombudsman and the role which can be played by the citizens' initiative.

In addition, it seems to me very important to make information available on the stage reached by work on a petition, as well as information on implementation of a resolution which is adopted as a result of the work of the Committee on Petitions. An example is something that Mrs Kolarska-Bobińska has also spoken about: a resolution was adopted on Nord Stream, yet the citizens, in my country, for example, are asking what has happened since. What is the effect of the resolution? This is, in fact, a response to what the European Parliament is doing.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, to begin with, I would like to point out and to emphasise the growing significance of the Committee on Petitions as an institution which rightly comes to the aid of the average EU citizen. The right to submit petitions to the European Parliament is an important form of democracy at EU level. For many people affected by different problems, it is an important way of defending their interests.

I would like to point out the need for cooperation and contacts between the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament and its counterparts in the national parliaments in order to create a common and

complementary system for the defence of citizens' rights. The monitoring functions of the Committee on Petitions with respect to the work of the European Commission are exceptionally important.

Finally, I would like to mention the necessity of familiarising our citizens with the competences of different EU and national institutions.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, if I try to focus on the most important elements in the debate, I think I can group them into three important parts: the first is better communication and a better information spread; the second is cooperation between the European Parliament and the Commission in the field of petitions; and the third concerns all issues related to the infringement procedures.

Regarding better communication, I agree with honourable Members that it is very clear that we should try to spread information better and try to find a way to explain to the citizens what the European Citizens' Initiative is, how it differs from petitions, what the relevant rights are and which rights relate to the Ombudsman. There is not enough information on the EU, and here I think we have to work together as regards how to improve the information spread among our citizens.

We have tried to improve the communication tools the Commission has at its disposal through the improved website. As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, the new Europa website is aimed precisely at overcoming that problem. We have already informed the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection about the work done on the website, and that committee will be very happy to pass that information on to the Committee on Petitions. We would welcome comments from the PETI Committee – or from any other committees in the European Parliament – on how they think we can improve the website and how we can better direct information to our citizens.

With the approval of the European Citizens' Initiative, our citizens will get a new tool with a view to setting the agenda for all of us who work on European legislation. I would like to warmly thank the PETI Committee in particular, because its experience and advice was very important when we were drafting the draft regulation on the ECI. I am sure that we will be cooperating very closely in the coming days and months – when this issue is being discussed and debated in the European Parliament, and once the ECI is in place – as regards how we can work even better with this instrument and with the citizens who will be using it.

The Commission is open to working in very close cooperation with Parliament, because we realise how important petitions are for our citizens and we understand that the best answer is one which is correct, quick and not subject to delays. If this is the case, citizens will get frustrated. But sometimes, it is not easy to provide quick answers because very thorough analysis and very thorough legal study has to be done. There has to be a lot of background research so things sometimes take a while, but I am sure that we will be working with Parliament in looking for ways in which we can improve and speed up the process in this area.

The last point concerns infringements. I would like to assure honourable Members that we take this issue extremely seriously, as you can see from the list of infringement procedures that have been opened. It is a regular process within the Commission. The Commission's primary goal is to encourage all Member States to uphold European law and all directives. We are trying to use all the means at our disposal to do this, including exchanges of views and encouraging Member States to correct improper transposition of European law. If this does not work, we take the matter to the European Court of Justice with a plea to correct the inappropriate transposition of European law. In the past, there have been requests from the European Parliament for more information on infringement procedures. I am very glad that we have now found an understanding as to how this will be done in the future, once the framework agreement between Parliament and the Commission enters into force. I am sure that, with the additional information you will have at your disposal, you can also exercise your rights and use your influence in the Member States to ensure that European law is respected.

I took note of the other detailed questions and comments raised and I will pass them on to the relevant departments.

Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Mr President, thank you to all of the Members for their contributions.

I believe that there is a thread running through all the speeches given by my fellow Members. This thread is the importance of the Committee on Petitions, because the faith and hopes of thousands of Europeans that their principal and real problems can be solved often rest on this committee.

That is why, of all the committees, the Committee on Petitions – and several Members have said this – is the one that has the most direct relationship with the public, as Europeans are directly involved in it. The significance of this committee means that it must be safeguarded and loose ends tied up, so that all of us – Parliament, the Commission and the petitioners – may feel that the committee is even more useful.

With your consent, Mr President, I will finish by asking the Commissioner to take note. I know that the Commissioner will do so, because many of the complaints that we have heard from fellow Members are completely justified. The following comments that have been made are totally justified: there is a lack of information, and it is true that certain petitions have been paralysed and were not completed.

I therefore believe that we must not be distracted but must see the issue through to the end. Those petitions that have been initiated, and which remain open and with unresolved issues, must be resolved. I believe that in your capacity as Commissioner, you must make efforts to try to solve the complaints that you have heard here in this House today.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow (Tuesday, 6 July 2010).

Written statements (Rule 149)

Jim Higgins (PPE), in writing. – I am delighted to see that the number of submitted petitions has continuously increased; this has been greatly aided by the opportunity to submit petitions online. The year 2009 saw 65% of petitions submitted online, and I am proud to say that Ireland has the highest per capita submission of petitions in the EU. The Petitions Committee is an invaluable tool for bringing Europe into citizens' lives through its direct interaction with petitioners. In 2009, 54% of petitions received were deemed inadmissible. This is a worrying trend which, if continued, will inhibit the effectiveness of the committee. Most of the petitions deemed inadmissible are the result of ongoing confusion concerning the powers and responsibilities of the Petitions Committee. We need to urgently introduce information campaigns for citizens on the powers and responsibilities of the Petitions Committee – this could be done through a one stop website, which would explain in a clear manner what falls under the committee's powers and responsibilities and provide information on other possible methods of redress for non-petition issues. The Petitions Committee is crucial in that it brings the powers of Europe to the people, who are best placed to judge the shortcomings in the application of EU policy by Member States.

IN THE CHAIR: STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

20. One-minute speeches (Rule 150)

President. – The next item is the one-minute speeches on matters of political importance (Rule 150).

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) First of all, I would like to express my sympathy to those who are suffering as a result of the floods in Romania.

Twenty-three people have died and more than 18 000 have been evacuated. The floods have affected 530 locations in 37 counties, roughly 9 000 homes and 60 000 hectares of arable land, as well as 41 national roads. The losses are continuing to mount up every day.

One priority at the moment is the building of a 4.5 km-long dam in Galați to protect this port city from the Danube overflowing. If the dam fails to hold, this will cause a real disaster. More than 8 000 people will be affected, as well as the biggest economic operators in Galați.

The Romanian Government announced that it is going to submit the documentation for accessing the European Union Solidarity Fund by 15 July. I call on the European Commission, once it has made a precise evaluation of the losses sustained, to make resources from this fund available to Romania as soon as possible.

Alf Svensson (PPE). – (SV) Mr President, our media are currently full of all the cuts and savings that need to be made for countries to be able to manage the debts that have been inflicted upon the people. In itself, it is understandable that a lot is being written about this, but there are, of course, those who have nothing to cut back on because they do not have any resources at all. Many of these people, our fellow human beings, live in Africa. The television cameras will soon be turned away from the South Africa of the football World

Cup. I hope that we can then focus a new light on the poor countries south of the Sahara. We need to do something, because it is scandalous that people are dying of starvation and thirst, and do not even have anything to keep body and soul together. I therefore believe that we need to have the courage to tear down the walls between private enterprise and business and the state, and allow entrepreneurs to provide aid in a way that is different from the way we have provided it in the past.

Antonio Masip Hidalgo (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, from this forum of liberty, I salute the memory of José Saramago, who I met because of his great interest in two writers from my city, Oviedo: Leopoldo Alas and Ángel González. Oviedo which, if good sense prevails, will be European Capital of Culture 2016.

José Saramago was committed. His opposition to the Iraq war was unforgettable, as was his commitment to the great causes of the little people, such as that of Aminatou Haidar and all the Sahrawi people. A communist who had the guts to criticise the excesses of the regime in Cuba, he was, however, a great writer first and foremost. He has left an indelible mark on Portugal, Iberia, Europe and the world.

Go on José Saramago Foundation! Go on Pilar del Río!

Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, as a candidate country, Turkey must share the values and objectives of the European Union, as set out in the treaties. It is therefore of fundamental importance that it commit to good neighbourly relations, as it has repeatedly been asked to do by the European Parliament and the Council, although a commitment goes beyond words. On 30 June, Turkey committed another provocative action in the sea area of the North Aegean, inside the Greek continental shelf. The Turkish hydrographic and oceanographic vessel *Cesme* sailed 13 miles north of the island of Samothrace and 10 miles off the coast of Thrace, without advising the Greek side of its course and activities.

An improvement in bilateral relations is in the interests of both Greece and Turkey. The Turkish leadership spoke recently of a new climate in Greco-Turkish relations. However, systematic violations of Greek coastal waters and airspace by Turkey are raising unanswered questions as to the honesty of their intentions.

I should like, once again, from this tribune, to call on the competent bodies of the European Union to send a clear and strong message to Ankara about this unbecoming conduct.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, the discovery of immunisation is one of the greatest advances made in the field of medicine. The vaccination programmes for children are a European success story. Diseases which, during the last century, damaged the health of thousands of children and sometimes even cost them their lives, have been almost eradicated. Today, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the eradication of smallpox.

Public awareness of diseases that can be prevented by vaccination is decreasing, together with people's motivation to have themselves or their children vaccinated. This reduction in the motivation for taking part in vaccination programmes is leading to falling immunisation rates. As a result, diseases such as measles and German measles, which were close to eradication, are beginning to become more widespread. Vaccinating a child against an infectious disease brings a personal benefit for that child in the form of its own personal health. However, there is also a personal benefit for everyone else. Vaccinations not only protect individuals but also society as a whole.

One of the main tasks of European health policy should be to convey the importance of vaccination programmes for children and the importance of immunisation in general and to increase the rate of participation in vaccination programmes, particularly in the context of the growing demands being placed on our health budget.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – Mr President, at the outset, I want to support the case made by my Irish colleague, Mrs McGuinness, in relation to Equitable Life: I also call on the UK Government to deal with this issue as a matter of urgency and to honour its commitments. I have been inundated with correspondence from my own country today in relation to this.

I wish to refer now to the temporary committee set up to examine the financial perspective for the years 2014-21, which will meet for the first time on Thursday.

(GA) As a member of the committee, I would like to emphasise the importance of a strong agriculture budget from 2013 onwards. It should be remembered that the total expenditure of the Union on agriculture amounts to only 0.4% of the gross domestic product of the European Union.

The continuation of a strong agricultural budget will ensure that the Union is well equipped to meet future challenges, including food security, the preservation of natural resources, including the environment, job creation and, most importantly, the economic viability of rural areas.

Ramona Nicole Mănescu (ALDE). – (RO) As you are aware, Romania has been facing floods for more than a week, which have resulted in 23 deaths and thousands of homes being destroyed.

In the current circumstances, Romania needs financial support from the European Union Solidarity Fund, all the more so as the government in Bucharest has proved to be incapable of managing the disaster, taking all the necessary measures and mitigating losses.

I would like, Mr President, to call for solidarity to be shown to those affected by the floods which have occurred in Romania recently. With this in mind, I also call on the European Parliament to support the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund and the allocation of resources commensurate with the losses sustained.

Mr President, my country needs this support as soon as possible.

Oldřich Vlasák (ECR). – (CS) The D8 motorway linking Prague and Dresden forms part of the trans-European network of motorways. This motorway has been under construction since the 1980s. It was originally supposed to be ready by the year 2000. It is now clear that, due to delays, even 2012 is not a realistic prospect.

The problem is a 16 km section running through the České Středohoří Protected Area. This project should be financed from European funds to the tune of around CZK 8 billion, and co-financed both by the European Union and the Czech Republic. However, in mid-March this year, the European Commission again informed the Czech Transport Ministry that the evaluation of the project to complete the D8 motorway construction had been halted for a cooling-off period of up to four months. Of course, we cannot agree to this. It makes a bad impression on the public, it has a bad impact on the environment and we are seeing fatalities on the alternative routes. I would therefore like to call on the European Commission to accelerate the process of negotiation and to issue a definitive position.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, according to Eurostat statistics, unemployment is going through the roof in all the countries of the European Union in which harsh anti-grassroots measures are being taken. There are a total of 23 113 000 unemployed in the Member States of the European Union, which is 1 801 000 higher than in May 2009. In Greece, unemployment has risen to 10.2%, although in reality, it is over 15%, and affects 23% of young men and over 27% of young women.

The PASOK government is brandishing the memorandum which it signed together with the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, with the support of the other parties of capital and the European one-way street, and is pushing to abolish social security in the public and private sectors, to abolish collective agreements, to increase the limits on mass redundancies, to drastically cut severance pay and the wages of young people who have just entered employment by 20%, to extend child labour by encouraging apprenticeships, and to generally extend the savage exploitation of young people.

This barbaric capitalist policy is typical of the policies of the European Union and the bourgeois governments of its Member States. The anti-grassroots policy is accompanied by the defamation and criminalisation of the fights of the class labour movement in my country for just one purpose: to shift the burden of the capitalist crisis on to the working people, so as to safeguard the profits of the monopoly business groups.

Working people urgently need to rally and step up their fight to overturn the anti-grassroots policy and ensure that their modern needs are satisfied.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, at a time when all the governments of the European Union are treading in the footsteps of the recent anti-labour measures in Greece, anti-democratic, anti-communist measures and provocative actions are increasing in the Member States and bodies of the European Union.

I specifically wish to condemn the criminalisation of communist symbols in Poland and the criminalisation of the historic truth in Hungary, which blackens the anti-fascist victories of the people. I should also like to condemn the ban on communist symbols by the Moldovan Government, supported by the European Union and similar measures in Russia.

I should like to take this opportunity to condemn once again the attempt to denigrate the sacrifice of millions of communists and anti-fascists by equating communism with fascism, as you are well aware.

Threats that strikes and grassroots fights are unconstitutional cannot stop social developments and the workers' struggle to overturn the barbaric anti-grassroots measures. The massive campaign to denigrate socialism is designed to convince the people that there is no alternative solution. We are optimistic. We can see with certainty that the workers are fighting back. We know that this fight is the only realistic alternative solution to the crisis they are experiencing.

Claudio Morganti (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as Vice-Chair of the Disability Intergroup, I would like to take this chance to speak briefly about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its ratification.

This convention simultaneously represents a goal and an important starting point for the civil growth of the world, even if its ratification by the European Union – decided last November by the Council – has not yet been confirmed by the United Nations because some Member States are delaying adoption of the code of conduct between the institutions of the Union.

I therefore hope that this House provides an impulse for the removal of these obstacles and that the democratic institutions of the remaining European countries proceed to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and, in view of its full entry into force, also ratify the Optional Protocol. If the European Union does indeed want to be a dynamic leader on the international stage, we must hold the full enjoyment of rights for people with disabilities as an absolute priority, both at national and European levels.

Nikolaos Salavrakos (EFD). – (EL) Mr President, the book by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoglu, entitled 'Strategic Depth', has recently appeared in Greek translation. In this book, Turkey's cohesive geopolitical doctrine appears to be that of a local, regional superpower with interests from the Adriatic to China, with particular emphasis on Cyprus, the Balkans and the Aegean.

A special chapter is devoted to Cyprus, on page 274 of this book, in which its geostrategic importance is highlighted, regardless of the human element of the inhabitants and their nationality and religion. At the same time, there is a clear expansionist allusion to the Greek island of Rhodes.

It says in this strategy manual – and I quote – that, like the USA which, although its population does not extend towards Cuba and the other islands in the Caribbean, it has a direct interest in them, so too, Turkey is obliged from a strategic point of view to have an interest in Cyprus beyond the human factor.

The trend towards acquiring former Ottoman territories which the book talks about is an indication of violence. There can be no violence towards the European Union. A message needs to be sent to Turkey.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Mr President, Spain has rushed to open up a new negotiating chapter with Turkey, obviously in an attempt to divert attention from its own crisis at home. However, instead of negotiating with Ankara about food safety, we should be tackling open subjects, including the unresolved conflict over Cyprus, the issue of Armenia, human rights, freedom of religion and attacks on Christians, such as the recent murder of a Catholic bishop.

The Turkish Foreign Minister has said that more goodwill on the part of the EU would allow for more rapid progress in the negotiating process. It is amazing that Ankara can specifically call for a new chapter to be opened, while, on the other hand, doing a very poor job of meeting its own obligations, in other words, fulfilling the accession criteria. The EU allows itself to be put under pressure and I do not understand why it is pushing forward with the enlargement process at such a rapid pace over the heads of its citizens.

Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu (NI). – (RO) I am appearing before you here today to express more than my astonishment or regret that, although we are living in the 21st century, in some parts of Europe, when it comes to freedom of speech in the press, there are practices prevalent which take us right back to the time of the Inquisition.

I find it difficult to understand how, even though freedom of speech is a constitutional right in the European Union, there are still Member States where both their own constitution and European regulations on the right to free expression are classified as national security weaknesses.

Let us not forget that it is the role of the press to inform the general public about every aspect of the life of the community it reflects and that, as long as it does not disclose documents classified as strictly confidential, there can be no question of the relevant state's security being affected.

It would be absurd for governments to be able to resort at any time to groundless explanations to gag the press directly or to use crooked laws to be able to impose self-censorship on it, triggered by fear. Basically, I do not think that a country whose government becomes the only source of press information can still merit being called a free or a European country, for that matter.

Georgios Koumoutsakos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, last week, the Turkish research vessel *Cesme* carried out underwater research, without first advising and obtaining approval from Greece, in an area which, from both a legal and geophysical point of view, undoubtedly belongs to Greece. This caused a severe diplomatic reaction from Athens.

The basic reason for this behaviour, which is causing problems in good neighbourly relations with a Member State, is that Turkey has not signed and ratified the international Convention on the Law of the Sea. I would remind the House of a very important fact: the International Convention on the Law of the Sea is a mixed international agreement which has been signed by the European Union, by all the Member States and by all the candidate countries other than Turkey. It therefore forms an integral part of the Community acquis. That is why every candidate country has to adopt UNCLOS before acceding to the European Union.

This is a very serious prerequisite. Failure on Turkey's part to meet it will have negative repercussions on subsequent accession negotiations and on specific chapters, such as the fisheries and energy chapter, which is why Parliament should encourage Turkey to sign and ratify this convention.

Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (PPE). – Mr President, I would like to come back to the discussion that we had today ...

(PL) ... about the citizens' initiative. I would like us to place a strong emphasis on this again. I have the impression that in today's discussion, we have left out the question of social communication – something we emphasised strongly when we promoted the Treaty of Lisbon. We often said to the citizens that this would be the greatest innovation of the Treaty of Lisbon – that the citizens really would be treated as individuals. However, I do not see sufficient commitment from the European Parliament in informing people about this.

I have talked with very many citizens about the citizens' initiative, and in general, they do not really know there is such a thing. We must very quickly and efficiently complete work on this initiative and make it available to the citizens. Let us not lose the opportunity to bring the institutions closer to the citizens. Just such an opportunity has presented itself during this debate.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, according to Eurostat data, unemployment has begun to rise again in the EU. In Portugal, it has reached new heights and that is the situation in all the countries most affected by the crisis.

Indiscriminate and drastic cuts in public investment, combined with a lack of liquidity in the markets, could lead to a catastrophic situation in terms of unemployment. Pragmatic measures must urgently be taken. It is, in general, the cohesion countries that have EU funds available to them, but the implementation of these funds is extremely low because of their complexity, slowness and lack of flexibility.

We are approaching the interim review for the Structural Funds. I call on the Commission and the Member States to carry out a profound review of these programmes, focusing on productive investments. I am also calling for a simplification of the procedures, so that these funds may be applied in a dynamic and flexible fashion. I would reiterate the importance of small and medium-sized businesses, and of support for entrepreneurship and first jobs for young people. I would remind you that if, for example, the Portuguese National Strategic Reference Framework were to help each Portuguese small and medium-sized business to hire a worker, Portugal's unemployment problem would be practically solved.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) One of the main priorities of anti-democratic and authoritarian governments is to restrict the freedom of the media. It is particularly alarming that the independence of public media is being threatened. Are the Commission, the Council and Parliament noticing that EU standards and the Copenhagen criteria are being violated? Does the EU see that the freedom of public media is being restricted in a number of Member States? They are brought under direct political control and pressure is exerted on them by withdrawing their funding. It is an ever more common phenomenon that the parties in

government restrict the information presented in the media for political reasons. This is why we must support Ivo Belet's report. Indeed, the European Union, in the form of the European Audiovisual Observatory, should monitor whether Member States respect the independence of the media. I recommend that an investigation into the media's independence should be added to the mandate of the European Ombudsman. We must protect the freedom of the press, the foundation of the European rule of law.

Ivaylo Kalfin (S&D). – (BG) Mr President, Commissioner, allow me to express a particular concern I have by asking you a question about the recognition of higher education diplomas within the European Union.

Unfortunately, in spite of the numerous debates and very clear European legislation on this matter, some Member States are continuing to make it difficult and, in some cases even, not to recognise the qualification indicated in the diplomas. I could give an example from Bulgaria where a degree received from a university in another European Union Member State is not automatically recognised, as it should be.

A number of additional documents have to be submitted, which are examined by a special committee. Apart from the considerable expense in terms of time and money, citizens wishing to legalise their diplomas are at risk of being rejected. This deprives universities of their rights to assess the circumstances for awarding a diploma, which directly contravenes Council Directive No 8948 of 21 December 1988 and the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union. I think that the Commission must adopt measures to halt this injustice.

Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in this speech, I would like to express my solidarity with the victims of the flooding that recently took place in Europe.

I would call your attention to the situation in northern Spain, in particular, the regions of Cantabria, Asturias, Galicia and the Basque Country, which have suffered the effects of a season of torrential rains and are struggling to return everything to normal as quickly as possible.

I would like to give special congratulations to all the civil protection agents and the affected local authorities, who have worked very hard to ensure the safety of the public and reduce damage in the affected areas.

It is time to stop assessing the damage and call for aid for the affected areas. The European Union's new Solidarity Fund could be one of the tools for responding effectively to this type of situation.

Moreover, the effective application of the directive on flooding is necessary to enable us to be even better prepared to face up to this type of situation.

Jelko Kacin (ALDE). – (SL) On Sunday, 11 July, 15 years will have passed since the troops of the Army of the Republic of Serbia, under the command of General Mladić, began to carry out in Srebrenica the most terrible crime against civilians on this continent since the Second World War. They forcibly separated more than 8 000 men and boys, including children, from their families and sent them to the killing fields. The extermination of the male population of the wider region of Eastern Bosnia which borders Serbia, who were killed because they belonged to the Bosniak ethnic community, is a brutal crime.

Srebrenica is an example of ethnic cleansing of the most atrocious kind; it is a crime against humanity and was declared a genocide in 2001 by the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Srebrenica was also declared a genocide by the UN International Tribunal in the Hague in 2007. In the Potočari Memorial Centre, the largest number, thus far, of identified remains of victims excavated from hidden mass graves will be buried. 800 innocent victims of this cruel act of revenge will finally be laid to rest.

It is right that we should be commemorating this Balkan horror in the European Parliament this week and that we should again demand that the commanders responsible be brought to justice and be held to account for their crimes.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in recent days, the Belgian police carried out a raid unprecedented in the history of the European Union. They raided the archbishop's palace in Malines during a meeting of Catholic bishops, confiscating their telephones, computers and confidential documents.

The bishops were held for nine hours without prior legal notice. Amongst the documents confiscated were deeds covered by the Seal of Confession, submitted by citizens who had expressly asked to remain anonymous. The tombs of two cardinals buried in the adjacent cathedral were desecrated and destroyed using pneumatic drills.

Given that the Treaty of Lisbon, signed by His Majesty the King of the Belgians, is based on the cultural, religious and humanistic heritage of Europe, which gave rise to the universal values of the inalienable rights of the person, of liberty, of democracy, of equality and of the rule of law, I would ask the President of Parliament to approach the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Baroness Ashton, to ask her to come and report on the events and how she intends to resolve this diplomatic incident, caused by an illegitimate act by a Member State of the European Union against the Vatican City State.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) The accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU and the extension of the enlargement process to include the Western Balkan countries are considerable challenges for the EU. Economic issues are often discussed. I would now like to talk about a factor which we tend to overlook. These countries have a large number of national minorities. These minorities did not immigrate to these countries. Instead, they became citizens of another country for historical reasons, due to frequent border changes. Very often, the language-related rights of minorities are regulated with more generosity in non-EU countries than in certain EU Member States. This is because these countries have realised that it is in their own interest to make minorities feel at home in their homeland. This is certainly an area where EU Member States could learn a lot from candidate states. Every citizen of the European Union deserves equal respect and treatment regardless of ethnic origin, nationality or mother tongue.

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, my personal experience is the reason why I would like to draw the European Parliament's attention to the issue of emergency medical care for MEPs when they are outside Europe. My own case, as well as the case of Haiti, show the need to establish precise rules for MEPs who need constant medical care while being brought back home. Parliament does not have a suitable unit which would be responsible for organising a Member's return in such situations. I think that a unit responsible for situations of this kind should be established within Parliament.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my thanks for the concern shown for my health at what was a very difficult time for me. In particular, I would like to express my thanks for their superb care to the doctors and all the medical personnel of the First Shanghai Hospital where I was treated, and to Mrs Claes, Mr Burriel and Mr Manelli of the European Parliament for their involvement and the huge amount of help which they gave me. Thank you from the bottom of my newly repaired heart.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) The economic crisis has affected many people. I would like to point out the need and, frankly, the necessity of taking special action to protect the poor, the excluded, the elderly, the unemployed and young people.

Young people are the largest group among the unemployed. They often begin their adult life without prospects and from a weak starting point. We know the best way to survive the crisis is by education and investment in one's own development. During the crisis, jobs are being cut and places of work closed. Fortunately, universities and other institutions of tertiary education continue to operate, and there is also a variety of forms of continuing education. Therefore, we should create suitable forms of support for education and young people. It is good that at the suggestion of the rapporteur, Mrs Jędrzejewska, young people are one of the priorities of the 2011 budget.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, now, more than ever, the Europe represented by certain politicians is no longer a Europe of the citizens. Why is this? It is because some of us, namely politicians, are completely offside.

How can we explain to people that we prefer to cancel a meeting with NGOs which are fighting hunger throughout the world in order to meet a footballer as if he were a prince, and this on the day when 2 million people are protesting in the streets of France against pension policies? Nonetheless, five days ago, a football coach was answering urgent questions as part of a parliamentary inquiry. Did someone die? Had mass redundancies occurred? Was the environment being polluted? Had a terrorist attack taken place? No, not at all. The matter merely involved a football team which, like 31 others – or rather 30 others – is going to lose or has already lost, and a coach who had refused to shake hands with his South African counterpart, much like a president who refuses to shake hands with his fellow citizens. Imagine if the world was inhabited not only by childish, millionaire footballers who do not even feel any national pride, but also by people who have lost their jobs, or retired people who do not know how they will be able to afford to heat their homes in winter. These people do exist, and not only during the electoral period.

I am sorry, President Sarkozy, we do not – and never will – share the same values or priorities.

Ioan Enciu (S&D). – (RO) I would like to extend my condolences to the families of the citizens who lost their lives as a result of the floods in Romania. I can assure all those who have suffered as a result of these terrible events that our thoughts are and will be with them.

Unfortunately, the absence of a vital prevention infrastructure and poor preparation by the Romanian authorities, even though similar situations have occurred in the past, have resulted in material losses and, sadder still, in the loss of human life.

Just as I also asked during the debate in the previous sitting, I am asking the Commission again to put forward urgently measures for planning the basins in relation to internal and cross-border rivers in Member States, as well as a set of financial measures intended to implement these critical investments to prevent such situations arising again in the future.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Romanian people, France, Belgium, Austria and Estonia for their prompt response in providing assistance to Romania as a result of mobilising the Community Civil Protection Mechanism.

Paul Nuttall (EFD). – Mr President, I would like to bring to this House's attention a riddle which seems to be confusing MEPs from my own region in the North-West of England. In November 2009, Cumbria, which is in the northern part of my constituency, was hit by serious flooding. Homes were destroyed, businesses were ruined and sadly, a life was lost. As a result of the disaster, the British Government had every right to apply for the EU Solidarity Fund for assistance, and I am led to believe that the money which could have come in aid could have been up to GBP 100 million. Bizarrely, however, the British Government failed to apply.

The people of Cumbria are honest folk. They work hard and they pay their taxes and a good portion of that is sent out to Brussels. Therefore, I believe that they have the right to ask for some of their money back, and I consider it a failure of the Labour Government that it failed to act on this issue.

Iosif Matula (PPE). – (RO) The severe floods in recent weeks have affected extensive areas of Romania. Unfortunately, there have also been 23 deaths, more than 18 000 people evacuated, not to mention huge material losses, including thousands of homes that have been affected. The wave of floods is continuing, which is extremely serious.

The Romanian Government is coordinating the battle against the waters, but has also proceeded with an evaluation of the losses, expressing its interest in accessing the EU Solidarity Fund. The amount which Romania will be able to have access to will obviously only cover part of the total cost of reconstruction, but will give an important signal to citizens who have lost all the possessions they have accumulated during their lifetime in a very short space of time.

The aid provided by the EU will express Europeans' sense of cohesion in the face of any kind of disaster, especially during the current recession. This is precisely why I call on the European Commission and fellow Members to show solidarity with Romania and approve this financial aid as soon as the authorities have submitted an assessment of the losses and reconstruction plans.

Victor Boştinaru (S&D). – (RO) In the interim between the two world wars, Romania, Hungary and Italy experienced dictatorial, fascist regimes which provoked violence both inside these countries and internationally.

At the moment, Italy is faced with the monopoly enjoyed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi over the mass media. In Hungary, the Orbán government, whose party belongs to a group in the European Parliament, is proposing to have a long-term monopoly over public audio-visual material. In Romania, President Traian Băsescu, supported by a party which is a member of the same political group in the European Parliament, is stating that the mass media is a vulnerability threatening national security.

I want to believe that our European Union has learnt the lessons of the past and will oppose flagrant violations of the European Union's founding acts and fundamental values.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the Belgian Presidency of the European Union began on 1 July. In contrast to previous presidencies, the Belgian Government has not presented its priorities, but has only prepared a programme of work adapted to the EU calendar.

There is, therefore, a question as to whether, in the next six months, problems which are important to the European Union's residents are going to be discussed. It is true the Belgian Government has announced that during its Presidency, it will carry out a review of EU legislation and action to be taken in the event of natural disasters. This is very important, particularly in view of the recent floods which hit not only my country of Poland, but also Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and France. Those affected by such a tragedy expect swift and efficient assistance, as well as good coordination of the measures taken. Therefore, I hope that in spite of internal problems during the Belgian Presidency, work in this area will be undertaken as has been announced.

I would also like to thank all those who came to the aid of the flood victims, not only in Poland, but also in other countries of the European Union which were affected by this tragedy.

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, on 21 June, Russia reduced the supply of gas to Belarus and announced that there may be another reduction if Belarus does not make a payment of about USD 200 million. Belarus has said this reduction may also result in a technical disturbance to the transit of gas to Member States of the European Union. The experts have said that Russia's action was intended, among other things, to induce Belarus to sign a customs code which aims to establish a customs union, or also to induce Belarus to keep to the terms of a contract concerning the payment of market prices for goods exported to Belarus, and also to induce Belarus to sell strategic companies such as energy transmission networks.

However, it could also have been done to affect the reputation of Belarus as a transit country for gas coming to the EU, and, as a consequence, to justify investments such as South Stream or Nord Stream. I would also like to put a question to the European Commission about assessment of the effectiveness of early warning mechanisms for breaks in the supply of energy sources, because we have a contract with Russia which was signed on 16 November 2009.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, I want to welcome today's paper from the Commission on the retail market monitoring report: 'Towards more efficient and fairer retail services in the internal market for 2020'. This is a very important report and I hope it is the first step on the road to greater transparency in the entire retail chain.

Just last week, we saw examples of an inexplicable situation of very low agricultural commodity prices in some Member States, my own included, and yet very high food prices for consumers. There is certainly a market malfunction, as the Commission rightly points out. I think it significant that in this paper, we are looking at not just the economic aspects of retailing but also the social, environmental and consumer impacts in this sector.

I hope that Parliament will put in submissions by 10 September. I hope it does not take 10 years to get a fairer retail sector, because at the moment, both consumers and producers are losing out.

President. – That concludes this item.

21. Promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status (short presentation)

President. The next item is the report by Emilie Turunen, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status (2009/2221(INI)) (A7-0197/2010).

Emilie Turunen, rapporteur. – (DA) Mr President, I stand here today as a young politician and as a rapporteur with an appeal to make. Over the last year, more and more of my friends have become unemployed. These are motivated young people, who want to contribute to society, but who instead have to take their place at the back of the unemployment queue because there are no jobs. There are millions of examples of these young people in Europe, and their numbers are growing. With this own-initiative report, therefore, the European Parliament is placing itself at the top of a new agenda. We want to eradicate youth unemployment. We refuse to allow youth unemployment to take hold of a whole generation, and we will insist on helping young people to get off the ground with training and employment.

Statistics show that around 5.5 million young people under 25 in the EU have become unemployed and therefore, young people are hit twice as hard as the population in general.

The reason that I am particularly concerned about youth unemployment is that there is a risk of it leaving a lifelong scar on the individual and on society. We are only too well aware of the consequences of allowing

things to carry on as they are from the example of the 1980s, when we lost a generation to long-term unemployment, benefits and social exclusion. That is far too high a price. However, it is not only about economic forecasts; it is about real flesh-and-blood people. It is about young people with high hopes for themselves, who feel that they are not good enough. Young people who will find it difficult to get back into the labour market if we do not give them a helping hand now.

We, as the European Parliament, are therefore asking all Member States to prioritise the combating of youth unemployment and we are asking them to invest in education. Therefore, it is also vital that, as a strategic priority, the EU focuses on joint strategies right now. We need an integrated and ambitious approach with a combination of education, economic, employment and social policies. We have this at local, national and European level.

With this own-initiative report, the European Parliament is sending a number of specific proposals to the Commission, the Council and the Member States. Allow me to highlight a couple of the more important ones:

1. We are proposing a European Youth Guarantee, which will ensure that every young person under 25 will experience a maximum period of 4 months' unemployment, after which they are to be offered a job, a training course or a chance to upskill.
2. We are proposing a European quality charter for academic interns, which is intended to ensure that internships are completed in conjunction with education and that the interns are not used as cheap labour. At the same time, we are proposing more and better apprenticeships for young people during vocational training.
3. We are proposing that all Member States in the EU establish taskforces for combating youth unemployment, and also that the EU should jointly set up a taskforce for coordination, knowledge-sharing and new initiatives.
4. We are proposing that more resources be provided for the European Social Fund, and we want to earmark 10% – a minimum of 10% – of this fund for projects targeting young people.

We also want to ensure that we put a stop to the discriminating practice on the labour market of young people, purely on grounds of their age, being denied access to social services and a proper wage.

These proposals, and all of the other proposals in the report, represent our attempt to turn the youth crisis in Europe around. With the right policies and investments, we can transform the European labour market and create a better future for the young people of Europe. Here in the European Parliament, we are prepared to do our part to create more jobs and better apprenticeships and internships. In the European Parliament, we are prepared to make a difference for the young people of Europe.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) Unemployment among young people under 25 has passed the 5 million mark at European Union level, equivalent to a rate of roughly 20%.

Due to the harsh economic climate, young people are now encountering even more problems in finding a decent job. This is why I believe that Member States must promote the active integration of young people into society and the labour market. However, this cannot be achieved without sound, good quality education.

The potential of young people is a resource which is not used sufficiently. Against the background of demographic changes, they can make an active contribution to strengthening social welfare systems.

Finally, I wish to draw your attention to the situation of young people in rural areas. According to the statistics, they are disadvantaged. They find it more difficult to find a job than young people living in an urban environment.

Sidonia Elżbieta Jędrzejewska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the mobility and education of young people are budgetary priorities of the European Parliament for 2011. Only a few weeks ago, here in this Chamber, we adopted our mandate for negotiation of the European Union budget for 2011. For me, the Turunen report shows very clearly how much these very areas – the mobility and education of young people – require increased attention and active measures.

It should be emphasised that Mrs Turunen's report is further evidence which confirms the key significance of ensuring the right conditions for education and supporting all practical forms of the mobility of young people in order to implement the 2020 strategy. Facilitating young people's entry to the labour market is also an essential measure for reducing the overall unemployment rate in European Union Member States –

unemployment, which is the greatest difficulty and barrier to economic growth. It is all the more important that the European Union budget which is negotiated should include appropriate resources for implementing the objectives described in the report.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, unemployment is a problem which has affected the European Union particularly badly in recent years, and it has been made worse by the economic crisis. The problem is worse still when it affects increasing numbers of young people – people who are finishing their education at school or university and who want to begin supporting themselves. Apart from the severe social and psychological consequences which unemployment has for a young person, the massive scale of this phenomenon also has extremely detrimental effects on the economies of the countries concerned. We must not allow successive generations of EU citizens to have to face the spectre of social discrimination and an atrocious economy, so we must do everything in our power to guarantee young people a solid education and work experience as well as fair earnings, to ensure that they have dignified living conditions and a good start to their adult life.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Mrs Turunen on her work. As all the statistics sadly remind us, in all countries of the European Union without exception, the people worst hit by the crisis were those with temporary jobs, women and immigrants.

Those with temporary jobs are mostly young people and so there is a shocking percentage, which has not been seen for a very long time, of young people unable to find a job. The slow levels of growth which many expect to last at least two years and the fact that old people are staying in work for longer due to pension system reform, of which all are aware, mean that this problem is destined to increase in the coming years.

For this reason, the work accomplished is very important and I believe that it is essential that each Member State considers youth unemployment as a specific issue to be addressed with interventionist policies.

Sylvana Rapti (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, in this very good own-initiative report by Mrs Emilie Turunen, on which I congratulate her, the European Parliament calls for a better employment strategy from the Council and the Commission. It does so for a very simple reason: young people need Europe, but Europe also needs young people.

It is a two-way relationship, but it is extremely important and it must function for one very simple reason: if this relationship does not function, both sides will be the poorer for it. Although young people have all of their life ahead of them and will have second and third chances, Europe is quite old and will not have another chance in these difficult times of economic crisis.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, as this report demonstrates, young people are finding it increasingly more difficult to find jobs, which is a very serious situation.

Unemployment amongst young people is already, on average, over 21% in the European Union, but it is even higher in some countries, and it is becoming ever more difficult for young people to complete their studies and find a job where they have rights and a job with a respectable salary. Generally, they are offered work placements, which are often unpaid, exploiting young people and their need to find work. Even these placements are unpaid and, when they are given a job, it is temporary and poorly paid, and they have no rights.

This situation is unacceptable, so there must be policies in place to prevent such exploitation from continuing, creating jobs for young people, but also protecting the rights they do have.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is absolutely essential to help and guide young people into the world of work. School is not enough to train the workers of the future; instead, we should promote apprenticeships in businesses.

Fighting unemployment, particularly among young people, is one of the most important challenges facing the European Union. Exactly for this reason we must be careful not to ask too much – for example in the fight against climate change – from businesses, since if they decide to close, then there is no future for our workers. Instead, let us concentrate on fighting imports of low-cost goods from third countries which do not respect our rules and workers' rights, particularly in the case of child workers.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, it has become clear who has been really hard hit by the ongoing economic situation in the EU: young people under the age of 25, who have an unemployment rate of 21.4%. This is twice as high as the overall unemployment rate in the EU. Young unemployed people will

also suffer the consequences of their unemployment later in life. In addition, youth unemployment has significant, negative social and economic effects on our society, in particular, on economic growth. Young people represent our future. We must give them a fair chance, for example, by investing in better education and training in order to provide them with a solid foundation for their future lives.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, the young people of Europe need clear prospects. This report is the first step in the right direction. They need the prospect of a secure future that will end their financial dependency on other people and allow them to be self-sufficient.

The entry into the world of work plays an important role in this respect and internships can often make this step easier. However, internships are all too frequently abused. Therefore, we need a legal framework that protects committed young men and women and also ensures that the internships they complete are of good quality. An internship must be seen as part of a young person's training process and not as an opportunity for employers to find cheap labour. Motivated and committed young men and women must not be exploited and discriminated against in this way or in other ways. We must take decisive measures to counteract age discrimination, because the young people of Europe represent our future. We must protect and support them.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, I, too, have carefully read the report drafted by Mrs Turunen, and I must say it is an extremely complicated problem. Unemployment among young people has two aspects.

Firstly, what we should do so that those who have completed education or training can really find jobs. All policies which the European Union has at its disposal should help achieve this, including agricultural policy. When reforming the common agricultural policy, we should take care that appropriate programmes, projects and funding for these objectives are given a place in the overall European Union budget.

The second matter concerns social projects which will enable young people to develop their home situation and also provide them with a high standard of public services. I am thinking here of schools, nursery schools and crèches. There is a great shortage of these even in very large cities, not to mention small towns and villages throughout the European Union.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, youth unemployment is a travesty in the European Union at this time. It is an absolute tragedy that 20% of young people are unemployed. Many of them are highly educated, fully qualified and mad for work, but they cannot get jobs because they are paying for the sins of others – the sins of financial terrorists, greedy speculators, overpaid bankers, golf-playing non-performing regulators. Young people cannot get jobs as a result.

We have got to do something about it. We have got to create internships for them and give them jobs. They do not have to be highly paid jobs and they do not even have to be full-time jobs, but certainly these young people need to start working because, the longer a person stays without work, the more difficult it is to become a good worker. We have got to take action now. If we do, we will be doing a great service to the youth of this Union and it will be remembered for evermore.

Frédéric Daerden (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I very much welcome the adoption of this text by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Given that we are currently in the process of negotiating the EU budget for 2011, the vote on this report comes at precisely the right moment. In fact, Parliament has expressed its desire to make policies relating to young people a priority. We welcome this move. However, such policies should not be limited to the issue of youth mobility. They should also relate to young people's rights. That is precisely the issue at stake here.

The exploitation of interns is a cause for concern and gives rise to the risk of creating a parallel labour market for young people. The precarious position of young interns who undertake internships in places where they later may stand a chance of being hired is harming the European economy, particularly with respect to the funding of social security systems.

In this regard, I welcome the fact that my amendment, which seeks to include measures to guarantee decent working and living conditions for interns, has been included in this report. In my view, this report represents a step towards establishing a real European statute for interns.

Katarína Neveďalová (S&D). – (SK) So, a token young person at last. Youth unemployment is actually averaging around 21% in the European Union at the moment, but in some countries, it is as high as around 40%, which is an enormous number, and surely needs to be halted.

Young people are the most vulnerable group in society at the moment because, if you cannot find work, you cannot live independently, and so young people are not starting families, which has a bearing on the EU's demographic problem. However, we need to give real help to young people – not just to talk about doing something, but to take real steps that will make a difference.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that, in a time of global economic crisis, cutting spending on education is surely the most stupid path to take, as this will only ensure that we have an ignorant population in the future.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, let me start by thanking your rapporteur, Ms Turunen, for her report, which is very timely. As was highlighted by several speakers, it is very clear that the young generation has been particularly badly affected by the economic crisis and the unemployment rate for young people is clearly unacceptable. We cannot waste the talent of our young people, where every fifth young European is without a job or without appropriate prospects.

The Commission therefore is particularly pleased, as am I personally, by the very good title of this report, because it is very clear that we need better-quality jobs for young people and that they need to get appropriate work experience. Where and how better to get work experience than through high quality apprenticeships or internships? I therefore fully agree that these forms of training at the workplace should be used properly and should not replace regular jobs, as was highlighted by several speakers.

Full appreciation of the negative impact of the economic crisis on the young generation was fully reflected in the Commission's proposal for the EU 2020 strategy. It is not a coincidence or an accident that two of the key targets for the Europe 2020 strategy are dealing with young people, and dealing with the importance of better education, ensuring that a higher proportion of the young generation have a university diploma and reducing the proportion of young pupils who are not able to complete primary or secondary education.

The Commission will therefore come with a concrete proposal in order to assist Member States in reaching these targets. We will present our flagship initiative on 'Youth on the Move' in September and we will put the emphasis on the development of fully integrated policies, bringing together education, training and employment.

The objective will be to establish a framework at EU level for promoting youth employment, including through policies to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills and competences they need and that are required by the labour market by means of specific actions to help young people get a first job and to ensure that they move upwards once in the labour market.

We will present measures on how to support young entrepreneurs and increase the self-employment of young people, and we would suggest targeted actions for young people with no or low qualification to help them to move into the labour market.

As I said at the beginning, I agree with the speakers that we have to find concrete and positive measures to stop the waste of young talent and energy and to help young people in Europe. I am sure that, with the support of the European Parliament, we will find an appropriate recipe to overcome this very serious crisis.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 6 July, at 12:00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) Unemployment rates among young people are rising rapidly worldwide, and currently there are few opportunities for young people to obtain regular permanent employment. Young people entering the labour market are discriminated against on the basis of age, and I welcome what the report contains regarding access for young people to the labour market being encouraged.

I particularly welcome the proposal to create more jobs by encouraging employers to invest in young people. Ongoing training and instruction are extremely important for giving young people better access to the labour market, and the third level education sector is very valuable in this regard.

Internships and apprenticeships must be encouraged, to ensure that there is no exploitation involved and that young people are able to cover basic living expenses and enter the labour market in future without being discriminated against in any way. The Council, the Commission and the Member States must make contact with young people so that their needs and priorities can be taken into account when policy is being drafted.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The worryingly high percentage of young people out of work – double the general EU unemployment rate – reflects how difficult it is for young people to find work, a trend which has been significantly exacerbated by the recession. The current young generation, suffering a disproportionate impact from the economic crisis, are at risk of social exclusion. More than 5.5 million young people without work face poverty and hardship after leaving school. Young people are forced to accept precarious jobs, with low salaries and reduced social insurance cover, which affects their health and safety in the workplace. A higher level of vulnerability is being witnessed in rural areas where, in countries like Romania, poverty, unemployment, starting work at an early age and dropping out of school are ruining the futures of countless children and young people.

In addition to the strategies we have for economic recovery and creating jobs, adapting the education system to avoid producing a conveyor belt of unemployed young people and combating illegal employment and exploitation of young people, I believe that a European Youth Guarantee must be established, providing every young person with the right to be offered a job or a combination of work and additional training, after being unemployed for four months.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The economic recession has resulted in a huge rise in the youth unemployment rate, making it one of the most urgent problems facing Europe. At the moment, there are more than 5.5 million young people under 25 who are unemployed, equivalent to a rate of 21.4%, which is double the general unemployment rate. Previous recessions have proven that young people are worst affected as they are the last to be taken on and, in many cases, the first to be dismissed.

Many young people, especially in southern Europe, work on short-term contracts, making it easy for them to be dismissed during times of crisis.

The European Commission must increase the European Social Fund's funding, allocate at least 10% of this fund to projects aimed at young people and facilitate access to this fund.

I think that the most important issues which can be dealt with at EU level to help young people are: the European Quality Charter on Internships, which will ensure that in cases where practical experience is incorporated in education systems, certain conditions are respected, and the introduction of a European Youth Guarantee, which will guarantee every young person in the EU the right to be offered a job after being unemployed for a maximum of four months.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Young people are Europe's future, but they are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially during the current economic and financial crisis. The rate of youth unemployment is nearly 30% in southern and eastern Europe. Young people must benefit from greater opportunities in education and employment and from an improvement in the mechanisms promoting social inclusion and active participation in society.

Member States must take the following action to help create a 'Europe of the young generation' on the labour market: provide a smooth transition between the education system and labour market by promoting and supporting measures such as paid internships and professional guidance; provide young people and young mothers with access to the labour market and social welfare facilities; encourage employers to offer stable, long-term jobs to young people and a wage which reflects their level of effort and their professional and intellectual capabilities; protect young people from contracts which contain clauses placing them in a precarious position in relation to their employer. It is time for the well-being of young people to be promoted and for them to be provided with a civilised, truly European working and living environment.

22. Atypical contracts, secured professional paths and new forms of social dialogue (short presentation)

President. – The next item is the report by Pascale Gruny, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, on atypical contracts, secured professional paths, flexicurity and new forms of social dialogue (2009/2220(INI)) (A7-0193/2010).

Pascale Gruny, rapporteur. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, there is only one lesson to be learned here, namely, that full-time contracts of an indefinite duration must remain the norm.

First of all, I would like to thank all the colleagues who contributed to the drawing up of this report.

Today, I am disappointed that a debate has not been held on a matter which lies at the heart of the 2020 strategy. A number of my colleagues wished to speak on the subject, but were not given the opportunity to do so. Nevertheless, I would strongly encourage them to submit their contributions, in written form, to Parliament's services.

I am also disappointed that, having worked closely with all the political groups to achieve an agreement after numerous consultations, an alternative resolution, which is almost identical to my report, has been tabled by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance.

My group cannot support the two elements which Mrs Schroedter has added to the alternative resolution, and which the Committee had rejected in a vote.

First of all, with regard to the basis of these proposals, which concern, above all, 'false' self-employed persons: it is true that these are a real, widespread problem. As the report mentions, we would like a better definition of self-employed persons, but we must also ensure that the criterion pertaining to non self-employed persons is clearly defined, rather than relying on the presumption of employee status. The definition proposed by the Greens is much more vague and does not provide any added value to the text adopted by the Committee.

Secondly, with regard to the call for a directive to guarantee the same rights to all workers, including the right to freedom of association, irrespective of their professional status; I do not quite understand exactly to what rights this refers, or who is preventing employees or self-employed persons from joining or forming a union. In my opinion, it is pointless to call for such a directive, and the matter falls outside of the European institutions' sphere of competence.

In my report, I wanted to make full-time contracts of an indefinite duration the norm and condemn the exploitative replacement of regular jobs with atypical contracts. I would like to remind you that the principle of flexicurity implies not only flexibility, in order to adapt to the demands of the labour market but, above all, it also refers to job security, and the one principle cannot be implemented at the expense of the other.

The European Union must intensify its efforts to invest in skills and training in order to support sustainable employment. The unemployment rate remains far too high in the European Union, and atypical contracts therefore do have a role to play on the labour market.

With regard to young people, atypical contracts could, for example, provide them with their first experience of the labour market. If atypical contracts could provide young people with an opportunity, and make it easier for them to become salaried employees with contracts of an indefinite duration, then I would support these kinds of contracts. With regard to people who face a long period of unemployment, once again, if an atypical contract facilitates their transition back onto the labour market, then I am in favour of this kind of contract. Finally, if an atypical contract is used in the context of moving from one job to another or from one professional status to another, then, once again, I would support this kind of contract, as the main aim is to keep people in employment.

I would also stress the vital role played by the social partners and civil society organisations in the drawing up and implementation of employment policies. I call on all the Member States to ensure their full participation, as all too often, their level of involvement varies from one Member State to another. Finally, we must ensure that they enjoy an improved level of recognition, at both social and institutional level.

In this report, the European Parliament is sending out a strong signal to the governments of the Member States and to the Commission. Secure career paths are an essential aspect of a social Europe. The ball is now in the European Council's court. I hope that the Council will stand by its resolutions in the field of employment, adopted in the spring of 2010.

The European Union needs a clear focus and specific measures to protect employment in our regions and to create new opportunities, within the framework of the 2020 strategy.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur for this report, which clearly addresses a current problem on the European labour market: flexicurity. Statistics show that in recent years, there has been a definite move from full-time to part-time employment. This is not the only change that has taken place; atypical forms of employment have also increased. We must discuss and evaluate these changes, in particular, in the context of protecting employees' rights, given the fact that many jobs are currently at risk. In addition, these atypical employment relationships are often abused.

This report gives us the clear direction that we need in order to be able to react appropriately to these changes. It covers important issues, including creating sustainable jobs, promoting education and training and supporting equal opportunities for men and women. We must highlight the benefits of flexicurity and continue to bring about change in this area.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank Mrs Gruny for both her excellent work and the huge sensitivity she has shown in bearing in mind the perspective of other political cultures as well.

This is not always the case, and when it is so, it is right to point it out. Some of the statements made in the document, and which have been repeated here, are very important, such as the fact that permanent contracts should be considered the normal way of working and that, in any case, all those who are working on a temporary contract – whether or not by choice – must be able to count on the same rights as others, as everything should be aimed towards standardisation, without insecurity.

However what you reaffirmed in regard to social dialogue is also very important: recognising the value of representation, both of business and of workers, is very important. Collective representation – just like collective bargaining – offers an element of civility and cohesion in relations.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, the insistence on flexibility and so-called flexicurity has led to the spread of precarious and atypical employment. Instead of being the exception, it has become the rule to hire women and young people since the start of the insistence on flexibility in the workplace and so-called flexicurity.

This situation, combined with the growth in unemployment, is one of the visible sides of the capitalist crisis we are experiencing and is particularly responsible for the increase in the number of workers who are living in poverty, as they have salaries too low to guarantee them a living wage.

At the end of 2008, there were already 19 million in the European Union. Today, with the growth in unemployment, there will undoubtedly be many more millions living in poverty, despite having jobs.

A break is therefore needed with the neoliberal policies that have weakened labour rights, including flexicurity, which always disregards security. It is time to respect the dignity of those who work and create wealth.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to endorse the words of the previous speaker. She is absolutely right: it is a fact that excessively low salaries prevent the circulation of money. Poverty means reducing the circulation of money and therefore increasing problems.

Atypical contract work is a growing trend which, if used in an efficient way, can result in a useful tool for escaping the current economic and social crisis. In order to reach this objective, however, atypical contracts must satisfy certain conditions. Flexibility needs to be reconciled with security in order to avoid situations in which low-skilled workers take low-skilled jobs for a low salary.

The issue of flexicurity is tied to the training of personnel over a working life; that is, training which is held to be a guarantee of professional engagement and social integration. Greater protection for atypical forms of work is important to reduce black market work and guarantee better treatment for women and young people.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Ms Gruny, for her report. I think that even the timing is very fortunate because I see the great relevance of the report and the strong interrelationship between this report and the one which was discussed a moment ago.

The issues the rapporteur is tackling in her report are very topical because atypical contracts, flexicurity and the importance of the social dialogue are very important for the establishment of new and good conditions on the labour market. I also welcome the report's key messages and I am pleased to note that they are largely in line with the Commission's approach and the new Europe 2020 strategy.

I find it really reassuring that Parliament firmly supports the fair, balanced implementation of the flexicurity principles. I also agree that there is a need to update our thinking on flexicurity in the light of the current crisis. While the common principles and the four components of flexicurity remain valid, their substance needs to be further elaborated in the light of the new circumstances resulting from the current economic crisis – including higher unemployment, budget constraints, the development of the new forms of employment, faster and more complex transitions and more diversified job-seekers' profiles.

I also believe that social dialogue on flexicurity should be strengthened at all levels – at European, national, local and, very importantly, company level. This is the precondition for a successful implementation of flexicurity. The Commission will support the implementation of Europe 2020, including through a series of flagship initiatives. I referred to one a moment ago, but other flagship initiatives will set out an agenda for new skills and jobs, where we will analyse what kind of labour requirement there will be for the young generations in the years to come.

This Commission proposal, to be adopted in November, will aim to create conditions for modernising European labour markets, with a view to raising employment levels and to ensuring the sustainability of our social models. It will address many of the issues covered in Ms Gruny's report, including flexicurity and social dialogue. I am therefore very grateful for Parliament's input.

Ms Gruny, honourable Members of the European Parliament, I personally, and the Commission, are very much looking forward to continuing discussions with you on these issues.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 6 July, at 12:00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), in writing. – (IT) At a time like this, given the crisis figures and the worrying youth unemployment rates in Europe, the relationship between young people and the labour market is a highly important and unavoidable issue if you consider the urgency with which citizens and, above all, our young people, are awaiting a concrete response. To reach the light at the end of the tunnel with unemployment at a record low will require the consolidation of the link between business and training, above all, facilitating the transmission of skills and 'know-how'. Before the revolution of the information society, knowledge and information were almost entirely gained at school. Nowadays, the figures seem to confirm that knowledge is only partly acquired during schooling, whilst the role played by multimedia and on-site training appears crucial. I therefore think that ties with local areas can offer a unique training opportunity, if we consider small and medium-sized enterprises and local craft industries as a potential source of internships and apprenticeships, for the transmission of quality know-how to be exported elsewhere.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The numerous resolutions and decisions passed by the EU Parliament and Council on the world of work over the past three years have identified the actions required to realise the objectives of achieving higher levels of employment, increasing flexibility and security, fighting undeclared work and strengthening social dialogue. However, the legislative effort has not been translated into the realisation of the Lisbon objectives and forms of atypical work – which were designed to facilitate entry to the labour market and reduce its rigidity – have largely mutated into tools for the exploitation of social weaknesses. The weakest categories of people – women, the young, old people, people with a poor level of education, and those from less developed areas – have been subjected to working conditions which are more precarious than flexible. The proposal to the Commission comes at a delicate moment for the global economy, which could turn out to be further damaging to employment. Strong action on the European level is indispensable to promote the policy of social cohesion – a pillar of European unity – in order to break down the gender barriers and overcome geographical imbalances. Greater investment from the EU in training, simplification and security must be matched by greater investment from the Member States. Work must be considered a value once more.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), in writing. – (FI) The report's basic themes, the preservation and development of the European labour market model, employment contracts of indefinite duration and the tripartite system, and resolving the problems of atypical work and work undertaken in the context of the grey economy, are all worthwhile objectives. In the current climate of rapid changes in work life, atypical contracts of employment have become regrettably typical.

Right now, it is very important to look at what is taking place at the employeeentrepreneur axis. As the threshold for entrepreneurship is lowered, it is also important to ensure that employees are not outsourced as virtual entrepreneurs, who are, for example, worse off than others with regard to their social security and protection against dismissal. Atypical contracts have recently increased dramatically in number, especially where it concerns the youngest and oldest employees and women. This is also a worrying indication of the fact that these groups are the first to have to show flexibility with respect to their working conditions, or even their jobs.

The problems of atypical contracts have been discussed a great deal by the EU's different institutions. In addition to all the speeches, reports and joint regulations, the Member States of the European Union have an obligation to set an example. They should commit to an approach whereby they do not needlessly promote or maintain a system of atypical contracts in their own public sectors.

23. Commission Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union (short presentation)

President. – The next item is the report by José Manuel Fernandes, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on the Commission Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union (2009/2153(INI)) (A7-0203/2010).

José Manuel Fernandes, rapporteur. – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to salute and thank all those speaking about this report, which resulted in a large majority in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety: 55 votes for, 3 against and no abstentions. I am grateful for the work and involvement that has made its content possible.

Bio-waste accounts for approximately 30% of urban solid waste. More than 100 000 tonnes are produced each year. We must not forget that waste is responsible for more than 109 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. It is the fourth most important source of greenhouse gas emissions, after energy, industry and agriculture.

Bio-waste should be viewed as a potential resource. Bio-waste should be used to its full potential. Unfortunately, up to now, large amounts of waste have been deposited in landfill and this has had environmental costs.

The legislation on this is non-cohesive. We have legislation that is in various legislative texts and which requires harmonisation, legislation that requires and imposes clarity – another type of clarity – and greater simplicity. That is why we are advocating a specific directive; a directive that brings with it certainty and legal security for public and private investors, whilst respecting local specificities and the principle of subsidiarity.

However, this directive is essential. In this report, we obviously advocate the hierarchy of waste and, not least, prevention, which must be viewed in a broad way.

The best waste is waste that will never become waste. That is the reason why the public has options, for example, to ensure that gardens where there is a lot of greenery or which require a lot of maintenance and produce a lot of waste are viewed differently, in order to prevent this quantity of waste from being produced. The same applies to the food industry, where packets of food are often wasted and thrown out because their expiry dates have lapsed.

Raising public awareness and moving towards a society that recycles is fundamental to increasing employment. For every 10 000 tonnes of recycled waste, 250 jobs can be created, while depositing the same amount in landfill only requires 10 jobs.

Waste is important when combating climate change. It is important to combat soil degradation by creating high quality compost – we also advocate the regulation of this compost by the European Union – and such waste is important in producing bioenergy.

We advocate making the remedy fit the results. For example, scientific research into compost is encouraged in order to encourage innovation. In the end, we are advocating a strategy for 2020 of sustainable, intelligent and inclusive development.

This is a report that is ambitious, but also realistic, because we want, for example, selective waste collection to be compulsory, provided it is possible from a local, economic and environmental point of view. This is why I used the phrase ‘we advocate ambition, but also realism’.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I would like to express my thanks for this report, and also to say that bio-waste should not be treated as a problem or as something which pollutes the environment and has an adverse effect on the economy.

Huge potential lies dormant in the appropriate use of these by-products. Proper management of bio-waste enables us to produce renewable energy, and this will contribute to economic growth, restrict climate change

by an appropriately managed recycling process and help combat the process of soil degradation thanks to the use of bio-waste to produce high quality compost. Of course, to create a suitable infrastructure for this purpose and to encourage businesses to conduct research and introduce innovative measures, appropriate financial outlays are essential. The costs incurred will, nevertheless, contribute in the future to a strengthening of the economy and an improvement in citizens' quality of life, so the game is worth the proverbial candle.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I should like to compliment Mr Fernandes on his report. It could not be more timely, because right across the European Union, the citizens at large are now getting to grips with what is happening to our world, the effect of climate change and especially how they individually can make a difference. It has taken a long time for that message to get through, but you can see it in schools: in my own country, more and more schools are now getting the green flag. The message from this is spreading out to their parents and the environment and there is much greater care as regards how they deal with issues, recycle waste and so forth. It can also be seen in agriculture: for example, farmers realise the damage that too much fertiliser causes, and they are now cutting back. I think now is the time to move and to help people ensure that they can make a contribution to the development of anaerobic digesters and so on, and, as other speakers have said, to the development of job creation for the new economy.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) I would like to congratulate Mr Fernandes for his work as rapporteur for the report on biogas in 2007. Biological waste is a natural by-product of agricultural production and forest management. This is why I do not agree with the rapporteur, as manure is an organic element of livestock farming. I am asking Mr Šefčovič to confirm what Parliament requested in 2007, namely, that the Commission should dedicate resources to biogas production. This would be very important. Composting, also mentioned by my fellow Member, Mr Kalinowski, is equally or even more important. Mr Fernandes' report states that the European Commission should provide funding for biological waste composting. As mentioned earlier, this is an essential endeavour for agricultural and environmental protection reasons, and it is equally important to acknowledge that new Member States face serious difficulties where biogas and composting are concerned. Please take into account the particular situation of each Member State.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, I, too, would like to offer my congratulations on the report and to draw attention to several elements which are of importance throughout the European Union. Up to now, we have not solved the problem associated with waste separation, and although some municipalities have managed to deal with this, there are very many regions, not just in Poland but in the European Union, which are far behind. Without good separation, it is not possible to make good use of bio-waste, and in this regard – this has already been mentioned – there are many possibilities.

I am thinking principally, here, of biogas plants. These are projects which should definitely be developed throughout the European Union and should be supported with funds – funds at regional level, but also biogas plants at a very local level – because production and distribution from the plant is so much more economical than from other outlets.

Sonia Alfano (ALDE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this report is undoubtedly a good piece of work and I should like to compliment the rapporteur on it. One of the first phrases of the explanatory statement struck a very positive chord with me, and I would like to quote it directly: 'waste management policy must transform the EU into a recycling society'.

However, I do detect some contradictions there. For example, the fact that separate collection is mandatory as long as it is the best option from both the environmental and economic standpoints. In other words, investments made by Member States in this area are not to be subject to discussion even if they are contrary to European guidelines.

In this way, as has already been seen with the framework directive on waste, the European Union will provide little more than a suggestion. Plus, we forget – by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, which the European institutions all too often hide behind – that it is our duty to provide ambitious and incisive responses to the problem of waste. Let us fix targets for separate collection and stipulate their fulfilment. Let us use best practices, like the 'zero waste' policies enacted in some parts of the USA and make them binding for all Member States.

Julie Girling (ECR). – Mr President, I, too, would like to give my congratulations to Mr Fernandes. Having read this report, we find it a comprehensive run-through of all of the issues associated with bio-waste: landfill, the loss of an energy resource and the need for quality control on compost. They are all covered.

So it is with great regret that I have to say that I do have an argument with one part of it. The rapporteur lost my support on the point where he talks about a mandatory – that means compulsory – separate collection regime across Europe. I object to this in principle on the grounds of subsidiarity and I object most particularly on the grounds that it seeks to lock in a method that, in many places, is being superseded by high-tech autoclave and other technology. In other words, it is becoming outmoded before we have even set it up, and this really puts EU regulation in its worst possible light. I object to the knee-jerk reaction to call for more regulation rather than create incentives and I urge the Commission to maintain its position and oppose the call for compulsion.

Piotr Borys (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I would like to thank Mr Fernandes for his report, which sets out ways of coping with biodegradable waste. I would like to say that 30% of such waste can be used for making compost. Of course, the most important thing is to have a recycling system. Unfortunately, the directives in this area have not been implemented effectively in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. We need to improve our performance at increasing recycling, including composting, which is the best and most natural way of managing this waste.

However, it also seems very legitimate to look at the possibilities for energy recovery. I would like, here, to give the example of Denmark which, in the area of renewable energy, has been making the greatest use of biogas plants. This is an example for the whole of Europe as to how we can manage the use of renewable energy on such a large scale. It seems legitimate that the future financial agenda – the 2020 strategy – should provide resources which will help this type of development in the Member States.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to start by thanking the rapporteur, Mr Fernandes, for his report on bio-waste. I would also like to thank the members of the committee for their valuable contributions on this very important subject.

As you know, on 18 May, the Commission adopted the communication on future steps in bio-waste management in the European Union. This communication is accompanied by an annex with a detailed technical analysis of the measures that could be taken to improve the management of bio-waste in the EU as a whole and in each Member State individually. While preparing this communication, our departments have been paying close attention to the debates on bio-waste held in the European Parliament. I find it very encouraging that we have arrived at the same general conclusions: there is still room for improvement in bio-waste management in the EU, and this improvement can bring positive economic and environmental results. I also agree that the key to success lies in better enforcement of existing legislation, especially the Landfill Directive. However, as optimal bio-waste policies may differ from country to country or even between regions, further analysis on the grounds of subsidiarity is necessary.

The main difference between the Commission's approach and the rapporteur's approach revolves around the issue of a possible bio-waste directive. The Commission takes the view that a self-standing directive would bring limited added value. It is possible to improve the bio-waste management based on existing and already envisaged legislation. Therefore, the Commission plans to initiate a number of actions aimed at improving bio-waste management, including: setting criteria for the production of high quality compost using the 'end of waste' procedure envisaged in the Waste Framework Directive; analysing the viability of setting minimum standards for the use of bio-waste in agriculture within the revision of the Sewage Sludge Directive; and analysing the possibility of introducing targets for separate collection or recycling of bio-waste within the review of the recycling targets of the Waste Framework Directive by 2014 at the latest.

I believe that we can meet the essence of the Parliamentary request through the package of measures proposed by the Commission and I am therefore grateful for your readiness to further cooperate on this important and challenging dossier.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 6 July, at 12:00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Pavel Poc (S&D), in writing. – (CS) In the European Union, 118-138 million tonnes of biological waste is produced annually, of which 88 million tonnes is biodegradable urban waste. Up to 40% of biological waste goes into landfills. A practice such as this poses a considerable pollution risk to underground water and soil, as well as contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. It also leads to the irreversible removal of sources of biological material from the business and natural cycle, instead of it being used to make high quality composts,

increasing the productivity of the soil and its ability to retain water. In connection with the need for massive use of composts in agriculture, it would be appropriate for the Commission to exert pressure for unblocking the framework directive on soil in the European Council. A fundamental shortcoming in the area of handling biological waste is the varying levels of implementation of existing legislation in the Member States. I therefore welcome and fully support the request for the Commission to draw up a proposal for a separate directive on handling biological waste by the end of 2010. The Commission's position on this matter must change and must become very proactive and far more ambitious than has previously been the case. I also consider it essential to strengthen training establishments for waste handling. The best and most indispensable way of supporting recycling and preventing the creation of waste is to create the necessary public demand. The most direct way to achieve this is by educating young people and implementing sustainable waste handling among our social standards.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), in writing. – Effective management of bio-waste can bring many environmental benefits, such as improved soil quality and the production of renewable energy in the form of biogas. So I support measures which will increase and improve the collection and treatment of bio-waste. However, the nature of mandatory collection systems and how collection targets are calculated will be crucial. Many smallholdings in Romania already recycle bio-waste, even though this would not be officially recognised under a collection system because it never enters the official waste stream. So, any future directive and collection targets for bio-waste must be flexible enough to allow for significant national and regional differences.

24. The European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region and the role of macro-regions in the future cohesion policy (short presentation)

President. – The next item is the report by Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development, on the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region and the role of macro-regions in the future cohesion policy (2009/2230(INI)) (A7-0202/2010).

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, rapporteur. – (PL) Mr President, to begin with, I would like to thank the shadow rapporteurs for our fruitful work together, which has enabled production of a document which is of great significance for a number of areas of the Union's work. The report on the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region and the role of macro-regions in future cohesion policy emphasises regional cooperation in order to implement measures covering a number of policies, including transport, fisheries, energy and agricultural policy, as well as scientific research. A real possibility of putting this ambitious plan into effect arose in 2004, when the number of Baltic states found in European Union structures increased to eight out of nine.

The priority elements of macro-regional cooperation are transport policy and environmental protection. These are linked by the necessity of reducing discrepancies in infrastructural standards as well as by the fact that they illustrate perfectly the structure of dependence on the part of Member States which is characteristic of this approach. There can be no effective measures to combat pollution and contamination of the ecosystem in the Baltic region without integrated action from each of the countries which are situated around its shores.

Secondly, macro-regional cooperation undoubtedly produces and contributes to the creation of conditions which favour the development of innovation. Using the huge intellectual potential of its residents, we can bring about an increase in the competitiveness of the economy of the entire macro-region. This fact, in turn, will have significant meaning for the development of the entire European Union, for which a stronger position and a more stable economic situation are of undeniable strategic significance.

Thirdly, we must not forget social objectives. Creating conditions for the prosperity of the citizens and inclusion of cultural, educational and touristic elements in the projects are of considerable significance. Furthermore, assistance with the development of civil society, which is the basis of a democratic political system, will also help strengthen the integration process. However, there can be no talk of such changes if people's general standard of living does not improve. Therefore, it is necessary to give constant and active support to the creation of new jobs.

The European Union strategy for the pioneering and pilot Baltic Sea macro-region is currently an important reference point in the debate on the future cohesion policy after 2013. Presently, projects implemented as part of the strategy use resources which come under cohesion policy. However, in view of their multi-sectoral nature, today's debate should be directed towards the need in the near future to establish specific methods

and sources as well as an appropriate method of financing macro-regional strategies in the future programming period.

Taking into consideration the future of these strategies, we look with great hope to the European Commission's plan to create a best practices database, which will allow precise observation of measures which are already in operation and enable their use as models for other strategies. Guided by the need for programmes of the highest effectiveness, carried out as part of the strategy for the Baltic and successive macro-regional projects, we call on the Commission to develop instruments and objective criteria for the protection of what has been accomplished so far. Thanks to this, the mid-term analysis of realisation of the strategy can be a reference point for the next undertakings of this kind.

We should also remember the need to have answers to questions which are crucial in this regard: are these strategies to be realised as part of the cohesion policy and how are they to be funded in order to make effective use of funds coming from the European Union? It is with great satisfaction that I observe development of the idea of macro-regions. They all have the opportunity to concentrate at cross-border level on issues which are important from the point of view of territorial cohesion, in other words, implementing the idea of integration which has been promoted from the beginning by the European Union. Furthermore, the creation of functional regions which share the same goals has a chance of increasing the effectiveness of regional policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, the example of the Baltic Sea serves as a model, is an encouragement to start work on other macro-regions and testifies to significantly better integration.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Mr President, I wish to say firstly that I am in favour of this strategy between the countries around the Baltic Sea. Firstly, it does not create problems in any way for other countries nor does it create problems for the European Union itself.

It is based on the three 'noes' – which are very important. Number one, no additional funding is being established; number two, no additional legal framework is being established; and number three, no additional institutions are being established. As the rapporteur has said, the countries are coming together to solve common problems, such as the environment and social and economic problems. Therefore, a lot of good could come from this and it could be a model for other macro-regional strategy in the future.

I managed to finish in less than a minute.

Artur Zasada (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I am convinced that the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region will contribute to sustainable development of the region. However, it is necessary to ensure that the document is updated at appropriate intervals and consistently put into effect.

In my opinion, one of the greatest challenges for the Baltic Sea region is the creation of an efficient sea, land and inland water transport network. Therefore, I am glad that the final version of the document includes my amendment emphasising the significance of the Central European Transport Corridor. I think this corridor, which is the shortest connection between Scandinavia and the Adriatic, is of fundamental significance for the entire Baltic Sea region. It will strengthen the infrastructure and social bonds between cities and regions, and will also contribute to a growth in their wealth. As it is not only an economic project, but is also a political, cultural and historical one, it is deserving of our closest attention.

Piotr Borys (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I would like to congratulate Mr Olejniczak on a splendid report. As we know, we have a new challenge for cohesion policy, today. It is undoubtedly true that macro-regional policy applies to our strategy for regions such as the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

I would like to point to a fact which Mr Zasada has already stressed in his speech. Today, two cohesive areas – the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea – have to be connected by a cohesive cross-border transport corridor. All possible resources should be made available for this in a new form of funding, so that these two centres of growth can be connected to one another effectively. I would like to mention that consultations over the TNT network are still in progress today. This network would assume cohesion in rail, road and water transport. The matter of connecting these two regions would appear to be a key factor in harmonising macro-economic policy for the development of the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas.

Olga Sehnalová (S&D). – (CS) On the recent visit undertaken by the Committee on Transport and Tourism to Latvia and Estonia, the problem of transport links between the Baltic States and neighbouring regions was, quite rightly, a major topic of discussion. It is not simply a matter of direct links to the east, where there are significant bottlenecks (the prime example is Estonia, where there is a delay of several days at the border

crossing in the current European Union border town of Narva), but also links to more distant European regions, which are similarly important. From this perspective, there is a definite benefit in the so-called Baltic-Adriatic corridor linking the Baltic Sea region with southern Europe. It has the unanimous support of all the affected regions and local authorities and will bring further positive effects in terms of economic development of areas far removed from the borders of the Baltic Sea macro-region.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) I congratulate Mr Olejniczak on his report, as the Baltic Sea strategy was the first macro-regional strategy in the European Union. Those of us who would like to create a Danube macro-region have a number of lessons to learn from the experience gained in relation to the Baltic Sea region. One such lesson is that it is advisable not to set too many priorities. Instead, two or three main objectives should be set that bring the countries of the Danube basin together. Similar to the Baltic Sea strategy, these are transportation – making the Danube navigable –, environmental protection – preserving the cleanliness and biodiversity of the Danube – and tourism. I believe this will be one of the key priorities of the Hungarian Presidency in 2011. I am very pleased that the Commission is represented by the Slovakian Commissioner, Mr Šefčovič, the Vice-President of the Commission. We hope we will not need five years to elaborate the Danube strategy. The Baltic Sea region is a good example for us.

Jacek Olgierd Kurski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, as a Member from Gdańsk, a city on the Baltic, I support the strategy for the Baltic Sea region as a pilot project for similar macro-regional strategies. I would like it to be a successful project. I say this, however, with two reservations.

Firstly, for specific projects to be included in the strategy, money has to be available. For there to be money, there have to be specific sources of funding. Otherwise, the strategy becomes an academic exercise and talk for the sake of talking. For sources of funding to be available, a decision needs to be made about whether this will be extra money for the strategy or if it is going to come from cuts made in other sectoral programmes or regional policies. This would not be a good idea.

The second reservation is of a more particular nature. Unfortunately, the Baltic is still the most polluted sea in Europe. Meanwhile, with the European Union's acquiescence and the support of certain Member States, the controversial Northern Gas Pipeline is being built. As is rightly emphasised in the report, there is a need to reduce the region's dependence on supplies of energy from Russia. What are our resolutions worth if, two years ago, the European Parliament opposed construction of the Northern Gas Pipeline yet, two years on, it is being built anyway? Despite these reservations, the strategy is worthy of support and the region worthy of the opportunity.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, in congratulating the rapporteur, I would like to emphasise again that the strategy for the Baltic Sea region is the first macro-regional strategy of its kind, and that the success it might achieve will be a model for other, similar regions. The strategy's objective is to reduce the differences in social and economic development of the Baltic states. Protection of the environment and development of transport infrastructure are very important pillars of the strategy. Integration of the area in this way will certainly contribute to the faster development and greater attractiveness of the countries of the Baltic Sea region.

However, one condition for the success of this strategy is the development of good and effective cooperation on management at EU, national, regional and local levels.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) The strategy for the Baltic Sea region is important for two reasons. Firstly, it provides an integrated framework for tackling the challenges and opportunities present in this region. Secondly, it is a pilot for future macro-regional strategies. This is why analysing its success can serve as a model for the way in which future strategies can be implemented, especially the Danube strategy.

I think that the European Union's policies and programmes are hugely important to the region and will form key elements of the strategy. To ensure this happens, it is of paramount importance for participating Member States to use all the funds which have been supplied to them for this programming period.

I would also like to emphasise that raising the profile of the regions' specific features could result in a much more efficient use of EU funds and create added value at regional level.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like once again to thank the rapporteur for this very important report and to thank Parliament for its commitment to the European Union's strategy for the Baltic Sea region. This new macro-region is testing out the new way of working. Its success will very much depend on how the action plan that accompanies the Commission communications

will be fulfilled. It is very clear that the commitment of the states, regions and other stakeholders will be of crucial importance for the success of the Baltic Sea strategy.

It is the first time that we have prepared an integrated strategy for a group of Member States who face the same challenges and who may benefit from the same opportunities. It will be a tailor-made strategy. We are preparing the implementation process for the strategy, with new governance and a new working method with a view to turning words into actions. For the first time, we are trying to come up with an overall synergy where we would like to put the financial possibilities – different instruments, programmes and regional opportunities – together in order to establish a new macro-economic approach to the region.

By addressing the environment, the economy, energy and transport, as well as safety and security issues, the strategy provides a new integrating approach and brings together the key policy areas, maximising the impact by encouraging interaction between the fields concerned. This approach has already proven to be a big success, as many projects have already been created, speeded up and co-financed by Structural Fund programmes only eight months into the implementation phase.

The Commission is very committed to keeping up the momentum we have achieved so far with this strategy. The annual stakeholders' conference in Tallinn on 14 and 15 October of this year will offer an opportunity to learn the lessons of the first months of the strategy and to make further proposals if needed. The environment is the first of four pillars of the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region, and the revitalisation of the water quality of the sea itself is the keystone of the strategy.

Several speakers referred to transport, which is, of course, another important issue that has to be considered in a comprehensive way. Some promising projects are already under consideration, in particular, supporting 20 priority axes, which will definitely improve integration of the region.

The Baltic Sea region is pioneering the macro-regional approach. Its results will give us a feel for the added value that this new working method can bring. The Commission is therefore monitoring its progress carefully and looks forward to seeing the development of the Danube strategy, which is currently being prepared. As Mr Tabajdi said, being from Slovakia, I am very glad that this project is being prepared. I am even happier that it will be under the careful eye of Commissioner Hahn, who comes from Austria, and who, I am sure, must have a very good understanding of the Danube region. Whether further macro-regions should follow depends on how these first two perform and whether other proposals are made to demonstrate a specific added value that goes beyond existing cooperation, and if they really meet the clear needs that cannot be fulfilled through other means.

I am hoping for a successful outcome with regard to the further implementation and accomplishments of the Baltic Sea strategy, and I wish the incoming Hungarian Presidency every success with a view to cooperation with the Commission resulting in solid proposals on the Danube strategy and the Danube region.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 6 July, at 12:00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Given that there are significant differences in the Baltic Sea region in terms of economic development and innovation and that there is the need both to increase the potential of highly developed regions and reduce inequalities, with the aim of creating an area where there is a high level of competition, which is essential in the context of an ageing population, I strongly believe that the inclusion of policies for harnessing the creative potential and experience of elderly people can help stabilise this group's role within the European Union's population.

I also welcome the contribution of the future strategy to strengthening cooperation between states and regions at macro-regional level and to drafting new joint action strategies, aimed at helping achieve a model for cross-border cooperation in Europe which can reinforce the region's attractiveness at European and global level.

I firmly believe that it is absolutely essential to set up a Baltic Sea environmental monitoring centre and an alarm system in the event of accidents and incidences of severe cross-border pollution, as well as a joint action force for dealing with these situations.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, I think the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is a legitimate initiative which aims to make the implementation of particular European policies more effective, including cohesion policy, transport policy, maritime policy, environmental policy and innovation policy. However, many misunderstandings have arisen in connection with the concept and I would like them to be clarified.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of funding of the strategy, so that mistaken opinions and false expectations do not arise among its potential beneficiaries. In the draft budget for 2011, the separate budget line for the strategy was removed and the strategy included under the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. Representatives of the European Commission are looking at how best to use structural funds for this objective, but most of the resources had already been allocated to other programmes before the strategy even came into being. Too little is being said about the use of resources available through instruments such as the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation, the Seventh Framework Programme in the area of research and technological development or resources allocated to improving trans-European transport networks.

Therefore, I appeal for a precise statement of who is responsible for putting the strategy into effect and of the roles of different players, so that we will not be dealing with yet another project about which much is said but which does not have any measurable benefits.

Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D), *in writing*. – (EL) I should like once again to congratulate the rapporteur on this excellent report. The strategy for the Baltic region inaugurates a new era for functional regions and forms the basis for a more effective response to important challenges by adopting integrated approaches. The coordination of actions within the framework of various policies with a territorial impact may act as a guide for the future development of cohesion policy. However, the importance of the strategy is not confined to that. Its most important aspect is the fact that it was formulated following broad consultation between the interested operators in the area at all levels of governance. The pillars, the priority sectors and the basic plans of the strategy have not been imposed from on high; they are the natural progression of plans and initiatives developed in the area a long time ago and they respond to the specific daily needs of the citizens. Within this framework, the importance is highlighted of a partnership between all the operators in a given area, so as to safeguard the best possible results from actions financed using the European taxpayer's money. It is, in essence, a pilot run for future applications in other functional regions.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) At the start of my speech, I would like to thank Mr Olejniczak for his report on the strategy for the Baltic Sea region – the first EU macro-region – which defines this multi-functional platform of cooperation and in which particular attention is given to common development objectives and challenges or trends in future macro-regional policy. It is also intended to prepare a kind of map of action for other macro-regional strategies. The Baltic Sea region is characterised by broad multi-level cooperation in economics, environmental protection and many forms of social development. The countries which make up this region share many common challenges, and although they remain independent, they strengthen implementation of the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea. The report, despite its fairly general nature, defines many common objectives and recommendations essential for successful realisation of the strategy, such as creating a good platform of cooperation, effective coordination and a management system. However, for all these challenges to be realised successfully, financial resources are necessary, and these, unfortunately, are lacking. Eight countries of the European Union and Russia are beneficiaries of the strategy. We should not allow the unsettled question of the strategy's finances to hinder the development and improvement of this ambitious, supra-national initiative.

25. Contribution of EU regional policy towards fighting the financial and economic crisis, with a special reference to Objective 2 (short presentation)

President. – The next item is the report by Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development, on the contribution of EU regional policy towards fighting the financial and economic crisis, with a special reference to Objective 2 (2009/2234(INI)) (A7-0206/2010).

Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, *rapporteur*. – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, the purpose of this report is to highlight the importance of regional policy to recovery in the European Union today, in the wake of the financial crisis and its impact on the real economy.

We want to emphasise that regional policy is the basic source of investment in growth. The Structural Funds are not only tools for ironing out irregularities and structural problems; they are also tools which must be adapted to current circumstances and used in the best possible way for balanced growth, for the functioning of the internal market.

The report focuses in particular on Objective 2 regions, regions which have accounted for an increased proportion of GDP since 2000 and recorded high performance levels in competitiveness, innovation and research.

Following the 2006 reform, Objective 2 regions focused on competitiveness and the creation of quality jobs. By way of example, to illustrate the breadth of this initiative, Objective 2 interventions relate to 168 regions with 314 million inhabitants in 19 Member States of the Union.

These efforts must therefore continue at European, national and local level. It is clear from the motion for a resolution that we want to support the regional dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy, a priority which targets not only regional and social cohesion, but also the competitiveness of the regions.

The resolution calls on the European Commission for greater flexibility in granting appropriations and taking decisions, so that better and quicker use can be made of the Structural Funds. We have already noted that, out of a total of 117 operational funds financed by the European Social Fund, 13 were amended in certain Member States of the European Union and adapted to financial difficulties and the difficulties in providing national financing. We are calling on the European Commission to support efforts by the Member States, so that they can make use of this adaptability.

Our basic proposal is to support the Council decision to increase advances to countries whose GDP has fallen by more than 10% or which have received IMF balance-of-payments support for the purpose of financial adaptation. We are also asking for the European Commission to be allowed to find flexible solutions for the N+2 and N+3 rules, so that Member States in financial difficulty do not forfeit European aid.

Another point we make is that the sixth progress report on cohesion does not include sufficient qualitative and quantitative data on Objective 2 regions. We therefore call on the European Commission to present a study containing all the necessary information so that we can intervene in terms of adaptability under the present circumstances and prepare the next financial perspective on the basis of real circumstances and real needs.

Another issue which we highlight is that, in special circumstances, such as those which gave rise to the report, by which I mean the economic crisis, greater flexibility is needed in the N+2 rule, in view of the objectives pursued by political cohesion and the effects of cyclical economic changes on public finances and private investment.

We also highlight the importance of promoting the JASPERS, JEREMIE and JESSICA initiatives, because there are countries such as Greece (which is not mentioned in the report, but I give it as an example), which signed up with the European Investment Bank in 2007 in order to develop these initiatives and only recently activated the procedures.

We therefore need vigilance, adaptability and coordination of the necessary means if we are to make good use of regional policy.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I fully support the rapporteur's proposals. I have seen the benefits of Objective 2 funding from my own experience, in my own country, and two weeks ago in Mannheim. If this were to be withdrawn, it would be a huge drawback for these regions. My own area got an entrepreneurial award from the European Union. Two weeks ago in Mannheim, I could see first of all the appreciation of the funding and, more importantly, the effect.

I think in the world at large, you have innovators and imitators. Very few can innovate, almost everybody should or can imitate. Often, you will find the best innovation in these little regions. I saw it in Mannheim; I have seen it in business parks, etc. Their work is benefiting their own regions but through imitation, it can benefit many other regions as well.

And, finally, as the rapporteur said, GDP cannot be the sole way of deciding the purchasing power of regions.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) I wish to begin by congratulating the rapporteur. This is a report which is both important and well written.

The role played by regional policy in mitigating and combating the economic and financial crisis is unarguable. The development of the regions and guarantee of economic, social and territorial cohesion are also crucial to the growth of the European Union's economic competitiveness and in achieving the EU 2020 objectives.

Against the background of the current crisis, I believe that the procedures for using the Structural and Cohesion Funds definitely need to be simplified and the eligible costs need to be extended in order to make an even more effective contribution to achieving the objectives relating to the labour market and social inclusion.

I continue to support employment in the key sectors of the economy and the guarantee of maintaining economic, social and territorial cohesion as a priority for the European Union. This will enable us to achieve smart, sustainable economic growth for Europe's states and regions.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Šefčovič, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to take the floor so late in the evening. I believe that cohesion policy has seldom been as important as it is now, in the midst of this crisis. One clear sign of a crisis is the fact that jobs and investment become concentrated in the population centres of the individual Member States. Now, in particular, we need cohesion policy to play an active role and to invest in the regions.

We need a driving force or an impetus of this kind in the regions. We need every euro that we can lay our hands on. With regard to Lower Austria, which is also an Objective 2 region, I can only say that we have managed in the past to generate three euros in our region for every one euro from the EU. We must have clear guidelines in this respect. In other words, we need greater reliability and we need to be able to plan ahead. However, particularly in situations like the one in which we currently find ourselves, there must also be the option of taking a flexible approach. This is why I believe that this report is so important, because it calls for flexibility of this kind and because opportunities are needed in the regions.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) The fundamental objective of the Union is to overcome the economic crisis. This means, principally, eliminating the structural problems which arose in the wake of the crisis, particularly in relation to competitiveness and employment.

The European Commission has made the following proposals, which are intended to bring about an improvement in the economy at national and regional level: support for undertakings, improving knowledge and innovation and increased flexibility for cohesion programmes. Therefore, we should accelerate investment, simplify the realisation of cohesion policy programmes and make these programmes more flexible. The foundation of cohesion policy programmes should be smart investment.

We should also take measures for further and deeper integration of the entire Union and strive for strengthening of the solidarity of the Union and its Community market, and the actions of individual Member States must not concentrate only on their own particular interests. The European Union must concentrate on creating permanent mechanisms which will guarantee protection from the adverse effects of the economic crisis.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) I would first of all like to congratulate Mrs Kratsa for drafting this report.

The governments of Member States across the whole EU are right in the midst of implementing tough measures aimed at national economic recovery. In addition to the austerity measures which have been adopted, I believe that we need to boost the investments made from the European funds.

In the context of exiting the crisis, Objective 2 in the cohesion policy is particularly important for making Europe's regions more competitive and for boosting employment capacity.

All the regions in Romania are still covered by Objective 1 of the regional policy, which is convergence. One viable solution to help my country emerge from the crisis is for it to have access to as many European funds as possible and for local administrations to be encouraged to implement as many projects as possible using European money.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur for her report on the role of cohesion policy in the recovery plan and beyond, and also to thank the European Parliament for its interest in the monitoring of the impact of this measure on national and regional economies.

Cohesion policy is conceived as a policy to support the reduction in socio-economic disparities and real convergence by investing in measures to foster structural change. With total financial resources of

EUR 347 billion for the period 2007-2013, EUR 228 billion of which is earmarked for Lisbon-related investment, this cohesion policy provides a powerful support for both budgetary stability and public investment in the Member States and the regions of the European Union. While this is not an anti-cyclical economic policy, it represents a powerful and relevant lever available to the Union for promoting investment in the real economy. This explains why the policy was included as a key part of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

The goal of this plan and of these European measures was to counter important negative impacts of the crisis. Therefore, the Commission proposed a set of legislative changes and targeted recommendations. The overriding aim of this proposal was to speed up implementation of programmes and accelerate financing to beneficiaries for the programmes already approved for the period of this financial perspective. We did this through increased EU pre-financing and a series of simplification measures.

The legislative changes entered into force in April 2009 and recommendations to the Member States, following the Commission's communications, were adopted in December 2008. So we can say that this legislative package was adopted within five months, which is a timetable fully compatible with the urgency of the remedies needed to be taken against the crisis. I would like to underline that this success was the result of the quality of interinstitutional work and fruitful cooperation with the institutional partners – and, in particular, with the European Parliament – because all of us wanted to respond quickly and adequately to the political and economic needs.

As a whole, these measures have been characterised as a positive move that provided the necessary means for accelerating spending and easing implementation obstacles. These measures were flexible enough to allow Member States to choose and implement those that are best suited to their specific national and regional environment, because we know that there is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' solution. Recovery measures had also contributed to reviving and improving implementation mechanisms of the cohesion policy by simplifying as much as possible some provisions of the preparation and management of projects. These measures were not only designed to fight against the crisis but also to take on a permanent role in the post-crisis situation in the present programming period.

Last but not least, the Commission will present a report on the implementation and results of the measures adopted within the framework of the recovery plan that concern cohesion policy in the European Union, following the Commission's commitment to submit to the European Parliament such a report during the second half of 2010.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, 6 July, at 12:00.

26. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes

27. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 23.15)