

MONDAY, 19 APRIL 2010

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

(The sitting was opened at 17.35)

1. Resumption of the session

President. – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on Wednesday, 7 April 2010.

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

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

4. Documents received: see Minutes

5. Lapsed written declarations: see Minutes

6. Petitions: see Minutes

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

8. Fight against breast cancer in the European Union (written declaration): see Minutes

President. – Written Declaration number 0071/2009, submitted by Members Elizabeth Lynne, Michail Tremopoulos, Livia Járóka and Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, on the fight against breast cancer in the European Union, has been signed by over half of Parliament's Members. Consequently, in accordance with Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure, it will be forwarded to its addressees and published together with other texts adopted in plenary on 24 February 2010. The names of the signatories will be published in the Minutes of the sitting.

Elizabeth Lynne (ALDE). – Mr President, I should just like to thank everybody for signing Written Declaration 71 on breast cancer.

Most of you know that this is the leading cause of death across the EU of women aged between 35 and 59, and we want Member States to set up nationwide screening programmes and breast cancer specialist units among other things.

I hope that the signing of this written declaration will be another step forward to help to make sure that we have EU-wide action to stop the dire consequences of breast cancer.

President. – I would like to thank our fellow Member, as well as all of you who signed this declaration.

9. Parliamentary immunity: see Minutes

10. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

11. Verification of credentials: see Minutes

12. Council positions at first reading: see Minutes

13. Statements by the President

President. – Before we begin the sitting, I would like to say that our thoughts and prayers are, today, with the families and friends of the victims and with those who were injured in the railway accident which happened last week in the north of Italy. It was, as we all remember, a very serious railway accident.

I would also like to thank all of you, Members and staff of Parliament – many people from Parliament – for attending and for organising the ceremony on Wednesday last week at 12.00 in connection with the Polish air disaster. The funeral of the President of Poland was held yesterday, and the funeral of the President of Poland in exile was held today. On Wednesday last week, we observed a one-minute silence in memory of the victims of the disaster.

I would like to thank you again for this act of solidarity.

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you most sincerely, Mr President, for the sympathy that you expressed for the victims of the accident that occurred in my region and my country, the autonomous province of Bozen – South Tyrol – last week. The people in my region are indeed extremely shocked by this accident, which cost the lives of nine, predominantly young, people and left many people injured. It is all the more shocking because this train was not an old train, but a jewel of our region and it was a new route that was only opened a few years ago. This accident was not due to a technical fault, either. It was purely and simply the result of a landslide, which is something that can occur in a mountainous region like the Alps.

Thank you very much, Mr President. I will pass on your words of sympathy to the victims and to the people of my country.

(Applause)

President. – I would like to thank everyone who is present in the House today, because we have overcome very great transport problems in getting to Strasbourg. Not everyone has managed to come. An extraordinary meeting of the Conference of Presidents ended a few minutes ago. The chairs of the political groups have specific proposals for you, which have been agreed and endorsed by the chairs of all the political groups. These proposals mean, in essence, that we will not have a plenary sitting on Thursday, and so there will be no order of business on Thursday. However, on Thursday and Friday, Members will be able to sign the attendance register and work as usual. There will be no plenary sitting and no order of business, but it is, of course, our obligation to work, and those who sign the attendance register on Thursday and Friday will be treated normally, as always on Thursdays and Fridays.

I would also like to emphasise that no votes will be taken this week in plenary or in committee, if any committee meetings are held. A committee meeting may be held, even on Thursday, but without taking a vote. This is what we have decided. The reason for this is that not all our fellow Members were able, physically, to get here, and we cannot deprive them of the right to participate in this part-session. So this has nothing to do with a quorum, because there will, probably, be a quorum, but it has to do with the fact that not everyone has been able to come to the part-session. Deferring the votes is not serious from the legal point of view of our obligations to the Council. The votes are important, and so we are postponing them by two weeks, and they will be taken at the May part-session in Brussels. From the point of view of our work with the Council of Ministers, and of agreements and second readings, this can be done.

I would also like to say that there is an important reason why those of us who are here should meet and discuss, because tomorrow there is an extraordinary item which we had not foreseen. This item, which we will discuss tomorrow morning, is related to the current transport situation in Europe and its consequences for Europe's citizens. Tomorrow, during a two-hour discussion attended by the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso, we want to think about the situation in Europe, because mobility has fallen, airlines are in danger, and we are faced with unemployment in places where there are large airports and where European airlines might collapse if they are not able to serve passengers for many days. This is, therefore, a serious threat to all of Europe's citizens, and so tomorrow morning's discussion is of key significance. This item of business had not been agreed earlier; it is a completely new item added as a consequence of the difficult situation in the European Union, and we must think seriously about it. The remaining items will be discussed, except some of the items planned for Thursday.

I would also like to inform you that on 7 April this year, I received a letter from the Member, Mr Farage. In his letter, the Co-Chair of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group refers to Rule 6(3) of the Rules of

Procedure and makes a formal complaint concerning a breach of protocol on European Union privileges and immunities. I have forwarded the request contained in Mr Farage's letter to the competent committee for consideration.

14. Order of business

President. – The final draft agenda drawn up by the Conference of Presidents at its meeting of Monday, 19 April 2010 pursuant to Rule 137 of the Rules of Procedure has been distributed. The following amendments have been proposed:

(First part of the changes: see previous item)

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to raise a point of order for your information. It is nice for you to congratulate us for being here today. Although it is difficult, it is our job. It is nothing special. I would simply like to recommend for next time that you make this job a little easier for us by providing us with information more quickly and by answering our emails so that we know what is likely to happen. Those who are not here today may then perhaps also come.

(Applause)

President. – I must admit that I do not fully understand your remark, Mr Leichtfried, because the Members have reacted very well. However, let us leave this discussion.

John Bufton (EFD). – Mr President, I would like to concur with the gentleman over there. We know there is an issue regarding air travel – of course we do; we are not silly – but I cannot understand why it has taken until tonight to come to this conclusion. We have all arrived here today, there are many people in the Chamber, and there are many staff. The costs to the taxpayer run into millions of pounds for us all to be here, and yet you decide to cancel it at a moment's notice. I think it is absolutely abysmal that you have done that.

I think there are enough people here to vote. We know the difficult conditions, but this is supposed to be a parliament. You have turned round now and said we are not going to vote, but you can come along and discuss things, debate things, which quite often means absolutely nothing, and then, when it comes to voting, we are told we cannot.

I think the taxpayer back in the UK will be absolutely appalled by this. We have trouble in the UK with finances, we are cutting services, we have a general election, we are talking about saving money, and yet we are wasting money hand over fist over here. Surely the time has come for this place to be shut down.

President. – Thank you for your remark. I treat all comments very seriously, but I would like to tell you that all the political groups and their representatives have agreed to the changes which I am about to propose.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – (NL) Mr President, I think it was a wise decision to postpone the vote because, although we have the required number of members for a quorum, we do not have the geographical distribution. However, I would suggest that the points on the agenda that have not been covered are condensed so that we can finish a full day earlier than normal, i.e. at the end of Wednesday afternoon, as we usually do on Thursdays, rather than at Wednesday midnight. That would at least allow people who *are* here to travel back home and we would not have to stay here on Thursday.

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, I will give people the floor after establishing the order of business.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, thanks to the law of unintended consequences, moving this week's votes to 6 May – that is the day of the general election in the United Kingdom – means that many, if not all, of the British MEPs from all parties and delegations will not be here on that day, which will also distort the final outcome. Could you move it to Wednesday, 5 May instead of Thursday, 6 May please?

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, this is my proposal to you. We shall start now with the agenda and after the agenda, we can start again with all your questions about the part-session on 5 and 6 May. We will decide later; it is not necessary to decide that now. The only thing is that the votes will be held on 5 and 6 May. All the decisions will be taken later.

We will start with the agenda. I do not want any further points of order now.

President. – The final draft agenda for the April part-session has been distributed, in which the following changes are proposed (Rule 140 of the Rules of Procedure):

Monday:

No changes.

Tuesday:

The sitting will begin at 09.00 with statements from the Council and the Commission on the disruption of air traffic in Europe.

The debate will continue until 11.00.

From 11.00 to 13.00, the following items will be discussed: a statement from Mr Barroso on the Commission Legislative and Work Programme for 2010 and a statement from the Commission on coordination of humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Haiti.

No votes will be taken on Tuesday.

Wednesday:

No changes.

No votes will be taken on Wednesday.

Thursday:

There will be no sitting on Thursday.

(The order of business was thus established)

15. One-minute speeches on matters of political importance

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

John Bufton (EFD). – Mr President, thank you for letting me speak again. In view of what has been said here now, at very short notice, I would urge you to look again at that matter of voting at the next session on 5 and 6 May.

It is quite likely that most of the MEPs from the UK will not be present. It is our general election on 6 May. The whole country will not be here. You are going to discuss things which will not represent the United Kingdom. I urge you to perhaps look at 4 May – bring it back a few days – because, if you deny that vote, you are going to deny the United Kingdom a chance to oppose or support measures ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – If I may give you my answer: I will take what you have said very seriously. We have two days: 5 and 6 May. We will decide how to proceed with the votes scheduled for 5 and 6 May, and how to divide them.

President. – Before we begin, I would like to make an announcement. As we all know, Rule 150 of the Rules of Procedure allows for one-minute speeches. Experience shows that we receive over two times more requests to speak than we can accept in view of the time available. The disappointment expressed by Members who were waiting for the opportunity to speak, and then did not have the opportunity, is inevitable. In order to avoid further uncertainty and disappointment, I am going to apply the following procedure in future for the one-minute speeches. Pursuant to Rule 150 of the Rules of Procedure, a list will be drawn up of 30 speakers, who will be chosen selectively so as to maintain a representative political and geographical balance. Priority will be given to Members who did not have the opportunity to make a one-minute speech at the two previous part-sessions. All Members who have requested the opportunity to speak will be told in advance if they have been chosen or not. Members chosen to speak will be expected to be present in the Chamber at the time when it is their turn to speak.

Jolanta Emilia Hibner (PPE). – *(PL)* Mr President, I would like to draw attention to the question of genetically modified food. The European Commission is working on a proposal to change EU law, to give Member

States greater freedom in deciding if they want to allow genetically modified organisms, because at the present time under EU law, it is not possible to introduce a ban on GMOs in Member States.

The European Commission is soon to propose that Member States be able to decide individually on the cultivation of genetically modified plants. However, decisions on the importation and processing of GMO seeds would still be made at EU level. In view of this, we should consider whether a special label should be introduced for GMO-free products. Such labelling should be clear and universally recognisable, so that European consumers will know the product they are buying has not been produced from animals fed with genetically modified feed. We should, therefore, think about a specific design of label.

Traian Ungureanu (PPE). – Mr President, may I remind this House that one year ago, Communist abuses were met by a popular revolt in the Republic of Moldova. The protests brought to power a pro-European coalition and, one year on, the new government proved its European stance. The Moldovan Government needs immediate support from the EU, and there are three ways in which European support can help Moldova: quick financial assistance, abolishing of visas and the conclusion of an association agreement.

I also have to mention here the case of Ernest Vardanian, a journalist arrested, held incommunicado and indicted for high treason by the so-called authorities in Transnistria. It is a serious human rights violation. I am asking the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the EU Head of Delegation to Moldova to act urgently for the immediate release of the detained journalist.

Anna Záborská (PPE). – (SK) Mr President, Secretary General, Commissioner, I should now deliver the speech I have prepared, but there have been some exceptional circumstances. We all know that meteorological conditions do not favour us all meeting here in Strasbourg without difficulties. This has caused many fellow Members and officials a lot of stress and anxiety.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr President, and also the General Secretariat under the leadership of Klaus Welle, for leaving nothing to chance and providing us with the best possible working conditions.

From the first days of the aviation problem, Parliament set to work on the reorganisation of transport to Strasbourg, and I would therefore also like to offer sincere thanks on behalf of those who cannot be here today. Thank you very much.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I tried to attract your attention earlier when you were talking about the new rules for the one-minute speeches. Coming from Poland as you do, you will know what it means to have different classes of people and parliamentarians. I would, however, ask that the people in the back rows also be taken into account in connection with points of order.

I have some specific questions. Firstly, can you please clarify for me what you said earlier, namely whether, by the next two part-sessions, you mean the next two Strasbourg part sessions or whether you are also including Brussels in that?

Secondly, what will you do if – as has just happened – Members are not here for whatever reason, even though they have requested the floor? Will there perhaps be another few minutes of catch-the-eye?

Thirdly, in line with this new efficiency – which is to be welcomed – could you please make a start right away today by reading out the names of the 30 speakers you intend to give the floor to today?

President. – Thank you for your remark. Application of the new rules will begin with the meeting in Brussels. The part-session in Brussels will be the first one held under the new rules.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, the problem of stray dogs in Romania has become topical once again as a result of the planned lifting of the ban on killing these dogs that has been in place since 15 January 2008. I am pleased that Romania has again refrained from implementing these plans. However, the alternative that has now been chosen, namely to place dogs in mass animal shelters, is not the solution either. The only sensible thing to do is to implement a castration programme. Romania has refused to do this, however. When it comes to this matter – like any animal protection matters – the European Union really should do something – and not before time.

Mr President, that was my one-minute speech. I wanted to use the remaining time to explain once again what it was I wanted to say earlier.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, when Simon Kuznets, the man who created the concept of 'gross national product', recognised how difficult it can be to measure a nation's well-being, based only on the size of its national income, I do not think he imagined that it would take three quarters of a century before five Nobel prize winners would work on a set of proposals for providing a more accurate assessment of economic performance and social product than that offered by GDP. This macro-economic indicator ignores the quality of products, fails to measure sustainable economic growth, and excludes other factors such as subsistence and suburban economies, household work and voluntary work.

Based on the outcome of the work carried out by this committee, summarised in the Stiglitz report, a proposal has been drafted for improving the national statistics system, defining the quality of life more accurately and including sustainable development in the calculation of the economic and social progress index.

In this context, I believe that we must have a coordinated system across the whole of the European Union for measuring quality of life, the extent to which economic growth can be sustained and, last but not least, social disparities. This step would signal that we have learnt the lesson from the recession which is having such a major impact on us.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KOCH-MEHRIN

Vice-President

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Madam President, last week, a court ruled that the closure of the Basque language newspaper *Egunkaria*, which I spoke about here a few weeks ago, was an unjust, illegal and arbitrary act.

The ruling states that neither the Spanish Constitution nor the Criminal Code allows a newspaper to be closed down, and that the whole charge was built on the premise that defending Basque culture means collaborating with ETA, which is absurd. It says that the people charged are completely innocent, that they do not belong to ETA, and that the newspaper has not funded ETA, nor has ETA funded the newspaper. The ruling also states that the detainees were held incommunicado, with insufficient judicial controls, which gives credibility to the claims of ill treatment and torture made by the detainees.

I would therefore like to make two requests: I would like us to take note of the consequences that demagoguery and the manipulation of feelings and emergency legislation have in a democracy, and of the fact that in Spain, the main elements of the media and the main parties accused all of us who opposed this injustice of collaborating with ETA. I would also like us to work together to ensure that justice is done for these victims and that the case is closed fairly.

Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE). – (EL) Madam President, last February, the European Commission report edited by Reuter and Trautmann on global illicit drug markets from 1998 onwards was presented to the European Parliament. This report is a valuable database and its conclusions corroborate certain evaluations made to date about the ineffectiveness of drugs policies in the European Union and at global level.

The basic conclusion is that current policies have failed in their main objective, namely, to reduce the demand for and supply of illicit substances, and are a key factor in exacerbating the harm to individual users, their environment, the economy and society.

In 2004, the European Parliament approved a package of recommendations, such as the Catania report. We are therefore calling for this issue to be revisited, within a broader framework, so that no harm comes to users.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) Madam President, my nation has been hit by a great tragedy. The President, the head of the Central Bank and military leaders have been killed. The funeral of the President and his wife was held yesterday. I would like to express my thanks for the expressions of solidarity which have been received from very many Member States of the European Union. The concept of European solidarity has proved itself, and this is, for us Poles, something very important. The Presidents of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia and the Prime Minister of Estonia attended the funeral. I regret that the head of the Council and the President of the European Commission were not there. They could not come, but the Prime Ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia did come, for example, and they had a longer journey. I would like to thank everyone who was there for these expressions of solidarity.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Madam President, please allow me, in one minute, to make a few comments with regard to Serbia. Serbia's ambitions to join the EU seem to be putting wind in the country's sails. In any case, the country formally apologised recently for the genocide in Srebrenica – that is certainly not something that can be said about the controversial candidate country Turkey, where there is the threat of sanctions if a country merely debates the issue of the Armenian genocide.

The interpretation of the Copenhagen criteria is, in my view, arbitrary, if Belgrade is accused of a lack of cooperation with the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague but the human rights violations by Ankara are considered unimportant.

However, it is nothing new for the European Union to apply double standards. In Bosnia, several ethnic groups are to be thrust into one multicultural state, whereas in Kosovo, it is suddenly legitimate for one ethnic group to split away from an existing state.

In contrast to Turkey, Serbia is historically, spiritually and culturally part of Europe and a key state for the security of the Balkans. Of course, we must not repeat the mistakes made in connection with the rushed accession of Bulgaria and Romania. All accession criteria must definitely be met, but Serbia is a European country and should become part of the Union.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Madam President, the recent dismantling of an important terrorist cell in Greece reminds us that violence and the threat to democratic institutions have no borders and are indiscriminating.

It is important to remember that the current economic crisis and the pessimism that it engenders in citizens feeds aggression and produces violence. No one disagrees that violence is reprehensible, whatever form it takes and wherever it originates. However, what we need to agree and put greater emphasis on is the importance of prevention rather than cure. That is why we need to put issues relating to SWIFT, the PNR and the strengthening of Europol and Eurojust higher up on the agenda.

Having said which, it is vital that we correct the chronic social pathologies that give birth to violence. We need to strike at poverty and unemployment. There is no longer any margin for inaction. Last time the leaders of Europe backed away from the social challenges of difficult economic times, this continent sank into the depths of hatred and totalitarianism.

Jens Geier (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to draw the attention of the European Commission and of this House to the worrying developments with regard to the prices of raw materials. Duisburg, home of the largest steelworks in Europe, is in my constituency. Here, and in the other steel-producing locations in the EU, the employees are very concerned about their jobs because the three large suppliers of iron ore are forcing price increases of 100% on the steel industry. In future, the price of ore is to be traded on the London Metal Exchange instead of price security being ensured, as was previously the case, by means of long-term supply contracts. The workforce and its trade unions fear that this will result in an extreme rise in the price of the base material, steel. This comes at a time when the potential areas for savings by means of cost-cutting programmes and reductions in the workforce, particularly after the most recent restructuring in the steel industry, have been completely exhausted. In order to draw attention to this situation, works councils and Germany's Industrial Union of Metalworkers have directed an appeal on behalf of Duisburg to Chancellor Merkel and to President Barroso. I would ask the Commission to respond to this appeal.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – Madam President, travellers whose holiday plans have been ruined by the volcanic ash face confusion over insurance.

Although airlines will refund or rebook flights under the Air Passenger Rights Directive, many passengers face the cost of hotel rooms and car hire and perhaps alternative flight arrangements, but some travel insurance policies are expected to pay out for the losses.

There are others claiming that this is an act of God, but I would call on these companies to be pragmatic, to be reasonable and to reconsider that decision, bearing in mind that I, like many others, have numerous constituents who are at airports in various parts of the world, costing them money that they do not have.

I understand that the Package Travel Directive is being reviewed, and this must be done urgently.

In conclusion, it is essential that this travel directive ensures that there is a standard set of rules which applies to a situation of this kind. Even at this stage, I would ask the Commission to look at this.

Claudio Morganti (EFD). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to propose in this, the democratic heart of the European institutions, a brief overview of the ultimate impact that European interventions have on communities, regions and individuals.

I believe that we must decide whether to present a universalist and globalist vision or, instead, to preserve the contribution and the identity of each individual. I believe that the second option is preferable; it is a broad vision in which the more unique dimensions deriving from specific vocations and traditions also have their place and their dignity.

Let us consider, for example, the effects of the 2006 Services Directive, the so-called Bolkestein Directive, on the Italian bathing resort sector. I do not believe that we should sacrifice, for the sake of a supposedly more efficient global system, the culture and the tradition of hospitality that have always characterised local communities.

I believe that, economically speaking, small enterprises are the most genuine expression of the cultural identity of local communities and that they should therefore always be safeguarded.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Madam President, it is not easy these days to be a fervent pro-European. I would like, today, to mention the problem of Eurostat. It has turned out that Eurostat was much more aware of the real situation in Greece than it was generally thought to have been. There are reports of which only parts were published and which uncovered cases of fraud as long ago as 2002, and then, of course, there was the great report of 2008. However, it is totally unclear where the reports go, what the effects of these reports are, and who can be held responsible for them – in this instance, for not acting on them.

I would therefore like to suggest at this point that we deal constructively with Eurostat and not just with regard to the scandalous practices, which of course also existed in the past. Thus, my suggestion is that the Commission takes action here to ensure the independence of Eurostat and to provide citizens with the information that we so badly need in order to revolutionise our democracy.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – (PT) Today, we are facing a natural disaster with unpredictable consequences. Science allows us to calculate the effect of the particles in the atmosphere on aircraft engines and avionic systems with reasonable precision. Science also allows us to calculate the movement of those particles in the atmosphere with a reasonable degree of precision. EU transport ministers are meeting today to decide how to deal with the air transport situation. The conclusions of this meeting should be based on scientific knowledge and the precautionary principle. The economy cannot take priority over people's safety. Europe must continue to act as a bastion of safety and quality of life. However, we expect swift, pragmatic solutions on alternative transport systems by land and sea.

Over the last year, we have been faced with a number of crises, natural disasters and an epidemic; in view of all that ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Ioan Enciu (S&D). – (RO) Madam President, at the end of this year, the Third Postal Directive is due to come into force, which will completely deregulate this market. The repercussions of the economic and financial crisis are well known, including on the postal market.

The effects of the crisis have multiplied following the implementation of the directive in Member States where the postal market has been completely deregulated. In this sector, the level of redundancies and the reductions in the incomes of the remaining staff are higher than average. There has also been a decrease in the number of transactions, an increase in postal rates, not to mention depriving citizens living in locations and areas which are difficult to reach of access to a means of communication and a universal service.

I believe that the social consequences resulting from the implementation of this directive must be assessed. It is our duty to prevent the occurrence of social dumping. I urge the relevant European institutions to examine the option of applying a minimum 2-year moratorium to the deadlines envisaged for implementing this directive, with some variation in each of the remaining Member States.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – (RO) I wish to speak to you today about the extremely delicate situation which a journalist called Ernest Vardanian finds himself in. He was arrested by Igor Smirnov's regime in the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria.

Ernest Vardanian is accused of high treason and espionage, which is not only absurd, but is completely laughable. Indeed, the journalist has been refused release on bail and is being kept in totally awful conditions. I would like to say that this action is used by the authorities in Tiraspol to intimidate Chişinău at a time when the new government which took office after last year's elections would like to move closer to the European Union and also resolve the Transnistrian conflict.

I am calling for the immediate, unconditional release of the journalist Ernest Vardanian, and I urge the authorities in the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria to make a move towards Chişinău in order to resolve the conflict there.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) The financial and economic crisis has hit the poorest people the hardest. To meet their needs, the European Union has declared the year 2010 to be European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is estimated that in Europe, over 40 million people live in poverty, and nearly 40 million more are threatened with poverty. It is particularly regrettable that a quarter of this number – 20 million – are children. The problems they have to face concern not only a lack of food, medical care and clothing but, above all, the absence of the prospect of an improvement in the situation and an escape from poverty. Providing a high level of education is the most important step which can help change this tragic situation. This need can be seen most clearly in small towns and rural areas which are a long way from academic centres. Therefore, I think a key solution for change is to increase funding for scholarship programmes for young people from poor backgrounds.

Derek Vaughan (S&D). – Mr President, I welcome the debate tomorrow on the air crisis because we need to remember that this has an impact not just on this Parliament, but on individuals and businesses across Europe. This is at a time when Europe, or most of Europe, is recovering from a deep recession. The UK, like many other countries – not all – is recovering from that recession, and that is due to the government intervening when the market failed and not standing on the sidelines as some would have us do.

There are many economic figures coming out in the UK in the next few weeks and I believe many of them will be positive. That is because the government has intervened. I think it is important for EU institutions also to intervene in difficult economic times. All the institutions of the EU should, in the future, make sure our budgets are aimed at helping individuals and businesses come through difficult economic times and to plan for the recovery.

Diogo Feio (PPE). – (PT) The matter I am bringing before this plenary session today is the budgetary position of the various Member States. I am doing so now that the time for submitting the stability and growth programmes has ended. These programmes forecast the medium- and long-term positions of the various Member States. In the specific case of my own country, Portugal, the Commission has remarked that the programme submitted is a risky one. That is a worrying sign for the markets, but it was essentially a sign that it was looking at stability and the health of public accounts, when it is also important to look at the issue of growth. Again, here too, the figures submitted by my country are not satisfactory, and concern for issues such as simplification for businesses and the situation of tax competitiveness is, unfortunately, still lacking.

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD). – Madam President, it was actually two speeches back, but I would like to ask the gentleman over there who was advocating EU intervention how he thinks the EU should intervene against volcanic ash.

President. - Supplementary questions using the blue card are not permitted during the one-minute speeches. Thus, it was not a point of order. Your fellow Member could perhaps answer your question on a one-to-one basis, but in any case not during the plenary debate.

Malika Benarab-Attou (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Madam President, I would have liked you to bear in mind a male-female balance when giving the floor. You gave the floor to a man five times in a row.

President. - Thank you very much. As you can imagine, as President of the High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, equality is very important to me. We have a list of speakers and we did try to make it balanced. Who gets the opportunity to speak during the debate is, of course, also dependent on who is actually present.

That concludes this item.

16. Power of legislative delegation (debate)

President. - The next item is the report by Mr Szájer, on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs, on the power of legislative delegation (COM(2009)0673 – 2010/2021(INI)) (A7-0110/2010).

József Szájer, rapporteur. – (HU) Madam President, Mr Šefčovič, many speakers start their speech in Parliament by saying that their topic is important, very important or even among the most important. I, too, would like to say this, but with much more reason than many others, since the subject we are discussing now, Parliament's power of legislative delegation to the Commission, is perhaps the most important and yet often neglected innovation in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Those who criticised the Treaty of Lisbon spoke of a democratic deficit. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say that this amendment, that is, the guarantee of Parliament's power of legislative delegation, is one of the most significant expansions of Parliament's jurisdiction. This means that representatives elected directly by citizens will henceforth be able, in Parliament and by virtue of their legislative powers, to oversee and veto the implementing resolutions and decisions introduced by the European Commission. In other words, this element of the Treaty of Lisbon, frequently mentioned in connection with the expansion of Parliament's powers, namely, that the codecision procedures have increased significantly in number and that the areas in which Parliament can participate have expanded, represents, along with the question of Parliament's power of legislative delegation, not only a quantitative but also a significant qualitative expansion. In other words, from now on, as the result of a long struggle and battle which has been fought here for many years, and which continues to be fought by the Members of the European Parliament, we are guaranteed that the decisions taken by the European Commission which do not fall within its own jurisdiction but are adopted through delegated legislative powers are overseen by Parliament. Many may say, of course, that in a formal sense, this oversight already existed. In a sense, that is true, but with such deadlines and in such circumstances, and as a result of such legislative and interinstitutional cooperation as did not allow for effective oversight. I would also like to draw attention to the fact that this new possibility, that is, Article 290 of the Treaty of Lisbon, will also transform the work of Parliament in the coming years, particularly if we, Members of Parliament, take these powers seriously and are truly able to take decisions on these matters.

If the outside world and non-specialists in this area are also to understand what this is all about, since this is a very technically complex subject matter that nevertheless concerns a democratic institution and serves to eliminate the so-called democratic deficit in Europe, we should point out the following: What this means is that Parliament and the Council, the two legislative powers of the European Union, cannot on their own deal with every matter of detail. Parliament sits every month, and sometimes there are circumstances, like now, when we are sitting but cannot vote, even though Parliament must, after all, oversee those issues which the Council or the Commission, under delegated legislation, addresses. From now on, it will be possible to do so.

In my report, I strove to make it clear that Parliament insists on these rights. We will not accept any additional obligation that goes beyond what is laid down in the treaty. We will not accept it because we wish to exercise our rights fully, and I think that European democracy will increase as a result. If we are to do so, close cooperation with the Commission and the Council is, of course, necessary, but we must not forget that now the competence rests with the legislators, and therefore with Parliament and the Council. I wish to thank everyone, all my fellow Members, for their cooperation in this complex subject matter, and also wish that Parliament will, in future, use its new powers to the full.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Madam President, I would like to start by thanking Mr Szájer for the very high quality report because we in the Commission appreciate very much the support Parliament has indicated for the horizontal approach to the delegated acts.

The legislator, of course, is entirely free to regulate all questions related to delegated acts in each basic act, but some guidelines are needed in order to avoid a piecemeal approach.

This was the purpose of the communication the Commission already made in December to indicate to the legislator what would be the preferred course of action for having a good and practical approach to the future legislation.

I would like to underline that the Commission strongly supports the idea of common understanding, or even interinstitutional agreement between the three institutions on the delegated acts, because this will bring the necessary order into the preparation of the legislation.

On the substance, I can just reiterate that the Commission very much welcomes the report. We might disagree on some specific questions but our objectives are the same. We want to see precision, efficiency, transparency and a clear and fair balance of power.

If you would allow me to be a little bit more specific, I will just make some telegraphic comments on some particular parts of the report.

Regarding the limitative nature of Article 290, especially the second paragraph, here we have a slight difference of opinion with regard to the means of control of the legislator over the delegated acts, but we would not like to enter into the legal controversy because what we think is that it is very important to look for the practical solutions as regards specific legislation.

Regarding the duration of the delegation of power, here we very much welcome and support the idea of tacit renewal, as expressed in the report, because we found it very constructive and we can say that some solutions of this nature have already been found in several legislative files.

I have another specific comment on the duration of the right of objection. Here, again, I would say that we are singing from the same hymn sheet because we also largely share the opinion of the rapporteur for the standard formulation of two months, with a possibility of extension for an additional two months, which could be fixed in a common understanding among our three institutions, which, hopefully, we will have in the future. I think we have already seen something like 10 positive examples of how this was applied in the current legislative work.

Regarding the urgency procedure, here we already had some clear examples in the past that there are issues as regards food safety or safety of toys, for instance, that sometimes call for a very urgent procedure and, therefore, we think that we have to find something even more urgent than the early approval proposition made by the rapporteur.

If you would allow me to conclude on the alignment, because this is very important for Parliament, here again we would advocate the pragmatic approach, because this Parliament, together with the Commission, has already done considerable work as regards the alignment of more than 250 basic legislative acts which have been aligned under the pragmatic approach.

Now we think that the priority should lie in the areas in which we have not, until now, aligned to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. I think that we should focus on them. Again, it would be an enormous amount of work, but we are already reflecting on how we can approach it in the most pragmatic and flexible way.

Jo Leinen, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, the European Parliament has been waiting for this moment for a long time, namely for Parliament to be on an equal footing with the Council with respect to the control of legislative delegation. To illustrate this point: in 2008, there were 6 000 delegated acts, in other words, a huge mountain of standards, which were turned into a kind of secondary legislation by the Commission and the old comitology procedure. Parliament had very few rights in this process. We were informed, but we were not colegislators. The Treaty of Lisbon has now changed that.

With regard to the control of delegated acts, we are on an equal footing with the Council, and we also want to utilise our equal standing to the full. That means, Commissioner, that when you argue that the urgency procedure is possible, then we will also need to receive information at as early a stage as possible. We want to receive information as early as the Council receives it.

Carlos Coelho, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (PT) I think it is only fair to start by congratulating Mr Szájer on the excellent report he has presented to us. As has rightly been said, the Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the powers of the European Parliament and introduces rules to reinforce democratic control. I therefore think Parliament deserves to be congratulated twice over: not only on Mr Szájer's excellent report, which I have just mentioned, but also because the new rules abolish the old comitology system, which we have criticised so often in this House.

We now have Article 290 of the Treaty of Lisbon, and I note that Mr Szájer's report suggests a number of ways of working that safeguard Parliament's prerogatives. With this new provision, Parliament can concentrate on essential legislative acts and give the Commission a margin of flexibility to complete non-essential legislative acts within the limits laid down by the legislator. As Mr Leinen has rightly said, we are now on an equal footing with the Council and, therefore, Parliament is not in a position of inferiority.

Madam President, I would like to highlight some aspects of Mr Szájer's report that I think are particularly important. The first is the idea that we reject any provisions that impose on the legislator additional obligations over and above those already included in Article 290. Secondly, the Commission must ensure early and continuous transmission of information and relevant documents. Thirdly, the periods should only start once all the language versions – I repeat, all the language versions – have been received. The last point is that Parliament's recess periods must be taken into account.

Eva Lichtenberger, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, these often underestimated structural issues with regard to the relationships within the institutional triangle have been summed up very well indeed in Mr Szájer's report. The cooperation was extremely constructive and I would also like to express my sincere thanks for that.

Through the Treaty of Lisbon, we have created new relationships, and these new relationships must not be undermined again through the back door. That is actually the key point in this regard. The purpose behind this was to place the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council, including with regard to delegated acts, and to ensure, firstly, that this is feasible and, secondly, can be guaranteed during the procedure.

The absolutely key issues for us, therefore, are that the appropriate conditions are created, for example, by us having clear access to the documents in good time in order to take the necessary decisions and, secondly, that no procedures are operated on the basis of a 'common understanding', but that instead we have agreements that are fixed and which cannot be subject to political arbitrariness or the political agenda of the day.

For this, we need firm, sound rules through which we can protect the rights of Parliament in practice rather than just simply taking note of them in theory. Thank you, Mr Szájer. It was an excellent collaboration and I hope that we can also use it to achieve what we need to achieve for our fellow Members.

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, the rapporteur is right to refer to the democratic deficit. The elitist construct that is the EU has a democratic deficit that has increased, is increasing and, after the Lisbon Treaty, will increase still further. I have to say that I am bemused that the rapporteur, despite his eloquence, sees Article 290 as a solution.

Our interpretation of Article 290 is that this gives the Commission the opportunity to supplement or amend legislation. Such an opportunity is far-ranging and wide-sweeping and is open to almost unlimited interpretation. We would argue that the safeguards against the inappropriate use of the powers thereby delegated to the Commission are clearly insufficient. Perhaps the rapporteur will comment in his response as to why they are sufficient. This therefore amounts to a further transfer of power from the elected Parliament to the unelected Commission, whatever the Lisbon Treaty purports to say.

We have always maintained, and continue to maintain, that the Lisbon Treaty lacks democratic legitimacy largely because a referendum was promised in the UK by all three establishment political parties, and all three establishment political parties spectacularly reneged on that promise. Article 290 is therefore a product of the illegitimate Lisbon Treaty. It increases the democratic deficit – I would be interested to hear from the rapporteur why it does not – and it should therefore be opposed.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Madam President, as a fervent pro-European, I was against the Treaty of Lisbon, precisely because it makes possible the kind of arguments that we have just heard, and precisely because it has not created the clarity and explicitness that I would want above all else for future generations. I am a realist, however, and I would say that now we have to live with it. It is very important to say once more explicitly that this article, Article 290, can be interpreted as saying that not just the Council, but also Parliament can repeal the relevant delegation single-handedly and in a relatively simple way. We will need to remind ourselves of this again and again.

Of course, what Mr Leinen has said is also true, namely that we now already have thousands of legislative acts which occupy a grey area in terms of comprehensibility, and which, in turn, continually provides grist to the mill of the anti-Europeans, the opponents of a European project, an EU which should function in those areas where we desperately need it. Once again, this has a lot to do with transparency. It therefore seems to me to be very important that in paragraph 10, it is proposed that the arrangements for the transmission of documents, among other things, need to be clarified explicitly.

Quite a few of us know the Freedom of Information Act, and quite a few of us have experience of the way in which things are done in the USA. Why then do we not simply do a 'copy and paste' and make it possible

for citizens, and also for us in Parliament, to obtain the relevant documents independently, and not by act of grace and through massive amounts of intervention by political groups? Why do we not make this into a right, given that we are already taking the great risk of having thousands of delegated legislative acts? On that note, I would say keep up the good work. We will be constructive partners on the road to revolutionising democracy.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Madam President, Commissioner, with regard to the process for delegating executive power to the Commission, the Treaty of Lisbon has something new to say on this. In fact, Article 290 refers precisely to this matter. Indeed, delegated acts are general acts which may modify unnecessary aspects of a basic legislative act, providing a mandate for delegating executive power to the Commission.

In practice, this allows for a mandate to be defined, along with the duration of delegation, the timeframe within which Parliament and the Council can lodge objections, as well the conditions for revoking the mandate. Parliament and the Council exercise control, but only after the adoption of the delegated acts. Delegated acts can also be published during the timeframe within which the European Parliament and Council can raise objections. However, I ask you, Commissioner, to guarantee greater transparency too during the process of drawing up the delegated acts.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Madam President, allow me to react to the comments of the honourable Members. I absolutely agree with Mr Leinen that the Lisbon Treaty brought in enormous changes. This was underlined by the rapporteur, Mr Szájer. I would like to assure you that we are fully aware of it and that we would use the procedure with the utmost respect for the legislator, because this is very important for our mutual relationship and for our good cooperative work.

With regard to urgency and to urgent procedures, I would like to assure all of you that we will use it only in extreme, exceptional cases. We know that, if we abused this instrument, we would have a very difficult relationship, and it is definitely not our intention to do that.

Concerning the comments by Mr Coelho and Ms Lichtenberger, I would like to assure you as well that we will do our utmost to guarantee and to provide you with an early transcription of all documents at the same time as the Council, and with all the necessary translations. We know the Lisbon Treaty introduced this very important change, that, when it comes to the legislative or financial matters, the European Parliament is on absolutely the same footing as the Council.

Moreover, we are planning to develop a new type of cooperation whereby the European Parliament would be involved in the preparatory work of delegated acts, and we would like to do this on very solid ground. You will therefore also find the expression of this new relationship in the framework agreement that we are currently negotiating between the Commission and the European Parliament.

Moving to the comments by the Earl of Dartmouth and Mr Martin concerning the unlimited powers which this Article 290 should bring to the Commission, I do not think this is really the case, because it is you, the legislator, who will decide (or not) to delegate the power to the Commission. It is you, the legislator, who will have the chance to revoke this power or to object to the proposals the Commission will make. So I cannot accept that we are entering a grey zone, because I think the powers of the legislator are very clearly set out in the treaty, and the Commission will, of course, respect that.

József Szájer, rapporteur. – (HU) I wish to thank my fellow Members for this debate, since the drafting of this report was made possible by the very close cooperation between the committees – and I would make special mention of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, which will have many such tasks in the coming period – and the political parties. I would also add, my fellow Members, that this is a struggle. A struggle with the Commission, a struggle with the Council, since it is a struggle for our rights. This report is about affirming clearly that these are our rights and we insist on them. It is much easier to do this in a situation in which the committees as well as fellow Members of other parties stand behind me, so that we make it clear to our partner institutions that Parliament insists most decidedly on these issues. At the same time, in order that we may be able to exercise this right effectively, I take the words of Mr Šefčovič as encouragement that the general alignment can speed up in the coming months and that we may indeed extend these rights as broadly as possible. We consider it important primarily for those areas where codecision did not previously exist.

Another very significant aspect, which fellow Members have also mentioned here, is that access to information is important. This access must be set out in an interinstitutional agreement, and discussions are under way

with the Commission and with the Council in this regard. However, we would like to know what the Council is doing; what sort of consultation it is conducting on these matters. As far as whether our rights have been expanded or reduced, ladies and gentlemen, please read the report and look at the legislation. I cannot interpret the latter any other way than that our rights have expanded. Until now, we had no say in what happens to the powers that we had previously delegated. In practice, Parliament was not assigned any role in this process. They listened to us out of politeness, but the deadlines were so short that Parliament did not even sit during that period. Now, on the other hand, we can veto or withdraw these decisions and are not even required to give our reasons – in other words, this is most definitely an expansion of rights. We are the ones with the legislative power and we delegate these powers to the Commission. Therefore, I cannot see this as anything other than an expansion of our rights. Fellow Members, it is now up to us alone to decide whether to exercise these rights in the future.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the next plenary sitting in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Raffaele Baldassarre (PPE), in writing. – Firstly, I would like to thank Mr Szájer for the outstanding work delivered in so little time. The delegated acts will be of paramount importance for Union law and the interinstitutional balance in the EU. Therefore, it is fundamental that they are developed and decided upon in a fully transparent manner which effectively enables the Parliament and the Council to democratically control the exercise of the power delegated to the Commission. To this extent, as advocated by the Szájer report, some issues will be of utmost importance and require our stronger commitment. These include, inter alia, the possibility for the European Parliament to revoke the delegation at any time and to make sure that Parliament and Council are conferred the same rights concerning their involvement in the process of delegation. Finally, I would like to stress that it should be a priority for the Commission to present all legislative proposals needed to adapt the *acquis* to the provisions of Articles 290 and 291, including the *acquis* in policy areas which, pursuant to the Lisbon Treaty, are now subject to the codecision procedure.

Zita Gurmai (S&D), in writing. – I warmly welcome the outcome of the report by Mr Szájer. Defining the new legislative system is a difficult and complex issue. I am convinced that the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and, in particular, Articles 290 and 291 thereof, reinforces the democratic character of the Union and rationalises its legal order. The introduction of the novel concept of legislative acts has far-reaching consequences. The report emphasises the slight differences among the key legislators, the competences and the detailed agenda of how they work with each other. The real question is: in case the EC gets more legislative competences and wider legislative authorities, which means an immediate increase in Community interests, what kind of control methods should be introduced on behalf of the Council and the EP? The new legislative framework of the TFEU set up the tools but there has not been any practical experience of their adaptation at Community level. Finally, I urge the legislators to have an interinstitutional agreement as soon as possible between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the implementation of Article 290, as there is an urgent need for greater transparency.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) The delegation procedure, although it remains in the background, is a very important transition in quality introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon. It should be treated as a fulfilment of the treaty, without which the position of Parliament will not be fully consolidated in relation to the other institutions in the decision-making process. For it is only by this procedure that we will gain full legislative power and a role in the implementation process of any piece of legislation. We well know the frustration associated with the laborious process of negotiating with the Council in the codecision procedure and in the case of decisions where implementation contravenes the interinstitutional agreement. Hitherto, 'comitology' was an expression of Member States' lack of trust towards the Commission, whereas now, the role of Parliament in the implementation of a legal act gives the process greater legitimacy. Parliament, and, indirectly, EU citizens, will find themselves closer to the process of enacting EU law, and this is how we should view the delegation procedure. However, for this to make sense, Parliament must be given full access to information and, in this, I am in full agreement with the other participants in this debate.

Zbigniew Ziobro (ECR), in writing. – (PL) Introducing the possibility of legislative delegation is intended to ensure that legislation, and especially legislation of a technical nature, will be completed and updated more efficiently without the need to institute a full legislative procedure each time. Delegation should, therefore, be seen as a tool for improving the process of law making at EU level.

At the same time, it is essential to ensure appropriate control over the use of regulatory powers conferred on the Commission. Parliament and the Council must, among other things, have sufficient time available to exercise the right to object to planned regulations. Above all, however, they must have adequate access to documents, analyses and contributions prepared during preparatory work on drafts of delegated acts. Only in this way will the powers of the Commission to publish delegated acts be of real service in improving the legislative process in the Union while, at the same time, retaining essential control over and transparency of the Commission's activities. It is also essential to develop suitable mechanisms of cooperation between Parliament and the Commission, so that Parliament will be kept informed about preparatory work which is in progress and be able to gain a good knowledge of the nature of the issues under consideration.

The resolution on the power of legislative delegation, which is the result of a compromise agreed between all the political groups, presents the above matters properly and deserves Parliament's support.

17. Air safety: EU airline blacklist (debate)

President. - The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Commission by Brian Simpson, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the subject of air safety: the EU airline blacklist (O-0024/2010 – B7-0205/2010).

Silvia-Adriana Țicău, *deputising for the author.* – Madam President, the question was submitted by Brian Simpson, on behalf of Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism, following the Commission's report looking into the effectiveness of the EU blacklist. The EU blacklist was established in 2006 to name, shame and ban airlines which are not complying with international safety rules. It was established in response to concerns over the level of enforcement of international safety standards and on the back of several fatal air crashes over a short space of time in 2004 and 2005.

Four years on, we know that the blacklist has proved an effective and valuable tool in promoting enforcement of ICAO safety standards and in protecting EU citizens. How we can now build on this is the question facing us today. In other words, how can we extend the protection beyond our own borders and further work towards the goal of improving global aviation security? The blacklist has a responsibility not only to identify where the safety risks lie but also to ensure that this information is effectively communicated to EU citizens. In line with this, how can we ensure that EU citizens taking flights outside Europe are aware of banned air carriers that continue operating in other regions of the world?

In cases where the air carrier's licence has been revoked, and therefore the air carrier does not appear on the blacklist, how can we be sure that passengers are aware of this situation? We have seen how effective the bringing together of different national blacklists into one comprehensive EU-wide list has been. However, the blacklist is only as good as the access we have to information relating to the safety of air carriers. How can we build on the information which forms the basis of the blacklist by improving the access to verifiable and reliable information? This means not only looking at strengthening the checks made in EU Member States but also approving the data information received from non-EU Member States.

Would the Commission consider establishing harmonised and standardised ramp checks and reporting? In terms of improving the data information received from third countries, would the Commission consider establishing an effective system of international exchange of reliable data, bringing us closer to a kind of worldwide blacklist which I know has been mooted in the past? Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the blacklist has proved an effective tool in incentivising airlines to meet international safety standards. But how can we work more proactively towards the ultimate goal of improving global aviation safety? By this I mean, how does the Commission intend to support national civil aviation authorities in meeting safety deficits based on ICAO audits and improving their oversight capability?

It is crucial that we ensure effective communication channels with the public, but it is also vitally important that, in the long term, we continue to work on promoting the enforcement of international aviation safety standards around the world. This will ultimately be the most effective way of improving safety for all passengers. The Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament looks forward to working with the Commission to try and build on the EU's blacklist achievements.

Andris Piebalgs, *Member of the Commission.* – Madam President, I thank Mrs Țicău for her very positive evaluation of the approach to the blacklist. The Commission is convinced that the existing measures already provide for a very high level of information and rights to the public for flights within and outside the European Union.

The list of airlines banned within the European Union is made widely available to the public on the Internet and by targeted information actions. The Commission liaises closely with European and international travel agent associations each time the list is updated. This allows them to be in the best possible position to aid the passengers.

National civil aviation authorities and airports in the territory of Member States are obliged to bring the EU list to the attention of passengers, both via their websites and, where relevant, on their premises as well.

The list provides useful information to people wishing to travel outside the European Union in order for them to avoid travelling with these airlines. The list has no extra-territorial effect – it does not apply outside the European Union. Hence, the Regulation establishes passengers' rights to know the identity of every airline they fly with throughout their trip. The contracting carrier – or travel agent or tour operator – is required to inform passengers when making a reservation of the identity of the air carrier or carriers effectively operating the flight. The passenger must also be kept informed of any change of operating carrier, either at check-in or, at the latest, when boarding. The Regulation also gives passengers the right to reimbursement or re-routing if a carrier with which a booking has been made is subsequently added to the list, resulting in cancellation of the flight concerned.

Different sources of information are used to monitor and assess the compliance of operators with international safety standards; namely, the safety audits carried out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the information provided by competent authorities of third countries, the information provided by the European Aviation Safety Agency in the framework of its inspections and investigations within the European Union or technical missions outside the European Union, the results of the ramp checks carried out on aircraft or air carriers at EU airports in the framework of the Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft Programme, according to the requirements of the relevant EU rules, and, finally, substantiated accident-related information stemming from accident or serious incident investigation reports.

I should also mention that the European Commission does not, at this stage, have a comprehensive list of the countries which have similar legislation but several states – the Republic of Korea, Bahrain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – apply the same restrictions as those defined in the European list.

I can confirm that the Commission is ready to work with Parliament to really improve this blacklist legislation, but it provides for much-needed safety in the air.

Christine De Veyrac, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, as I was rapporteur for this regulation almost five years ago, I am delighted to see that we have put in place a mechanism that works and that has even been extended over the years. The Commission's report on the application of the 'blacklist' regulation seems comprehensive and offers interesting food for thought. In particular, I endorse the idea of an international blacklist, the sole guarantee of a global harmonised level of aircraft safety.

Nevertheless, I would like to put some questions to the Commission. Firstly, I would like to know how the right to defence is exercised when it is not just one air carrier that is banned, but all the air carriers of a state. Do all of these air carriers state their case, or just the civil aviation authority of the country concerned, and, in this regard, how can certain safe air carriers avoid being included on the blacklist?

Moreover, another very important point in my opinion is aeroplane monitoring. Does the Commission specifically monitor all the aircraft of an air carrier which has been included on the list or whose licence has been revoked, so as to ensure that these aircraft do not take to the skies again under a different name? In this respect, has the Commission identified states believed to be used as flags of convenience, accepting banned air carriers which then change their name and state of registration? Furthermore, in the event that an air carrier is on the blacklist, does the Commission have any information about how travel agencies and ticket sellers have notified and compensated travellers, or offered them alternatives?

Lastly, before I conclude, I have a question regarding a specific matter: a number of MEPs have received messages, which could be described as insistent, about Indonesia, all air carriers of which have been banned, requesting that we ask the Commission to take Indonesia off the blacklist. I find this pressure to be inappropriate since commercial reasons do not justify endangering passengers' lives. I would like to know the current situation in that country, and whether, having been on the blacklist for several years, Indonesia has taken steps to remedy the safety deficiencies of which it was accused.

Saïd El Khadraoui, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (NL) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it is obviously a bit surreal having a debate about the blacklist at a time when the whole of aviation in Europe

is in chaos, but I understand that we will have the opportunity tomorrow for a topical and urgent debate and that is exactly what we will have.

The blacklist itself is an important topic and we can say that it has been a success thanks to, amongst other things, the impetus of Madam de Veyrac, who indeed worked hard a few years ago to make it a reality. We must build on and learn from the experience we have gained. There are some areas where further action is necessary.

First of all, in the area of communication with passengers. It is right that passengers need to be informed if they are booking a blacklisted plane somewhere, at a travel agency, for example, but it is often the case that passengers decide to take a domestic flight only when they are already in a particular place. My proposal therefore is that we explore whether it would be possible for travel agents and airlines which book flights to countries with unsafe airlines or unsafe aeroplanes to inform passengers automatically of this even though they themselves, of course, are not on the blacklist. We need to think that one through.

A second aspect here is helping passengers avoid aeroplanes, airlines and countries which have been placed on the blacklist. When it comes to capacity-building assistance for third countries, and certainly in the poorest countries, the European Union could provide much more help and know-how and ensure that the aviation authorities also have the necessary capacity to resolve the issues they have. One point mentioned by Madam de Veyrac is, of course, people being misled. Do we really have a watertight system? Are we sure there are no loopholes here and there through which airlines from a country which is on the blacklist might actually operate via other countries or islands? We have seen some examples of that.

To conclude, I also think that we should work towards a worldwide blacklist. I would like to know what efforts you have made with your colleagues from other countries, for example, at ICAO level, to make such a list become a reality.

Gesine Meissner, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, at the moment, our airspace is at a standstill – we know this; it has already been mentioned. We will soon be discussing how we can remedy this situation. We may actually have to fear, as regards economic questions in particular, that the airlines will soon face even bigger problems. Of course, this does not need to influence safety.

This is about aviation safety for European passengers. For us in Europe, it is a great achievement that people are able to move about freely, and that consumers can decide freely how they want to travel, which air carriers to book flights with and which not. In order to be able to decide freely, it is, of course, necessary to actually receive the relevant information as well.

Now we have just heard that we have already had this blacklist since 2006, and that in principle, people should be informed as to whether they can arrive safely or not. For me, the question is really – just as Mrs De Veyrac and Mr El Khadraoui have already said – whether there are actually holes in the system, and whether people really always get all the information on safety that they need. We simply want everyone who flies here in Europe to be transported safely and to arrive safely.

Finally, another thing that plays a role with regard to safety is to know whether an airline is financially strong. Airlines must regularly apply to their national authorities to make sure that they are actually allowed to fly in European airspace, and this process involves not just checking whether they actually observe all of their safety obligations, carry out all the required checks and are able to transport people safely, but also checking whether they are financially strong enough to be able to stay in the transportation business in the long term. As far as I know, to date we have not had a European airline on a blacklist. Despite this, though, we have actually had the SkyEurope incident just in the last year. What happened then was that European citizens had booked with a European airline, but had no information on the fact that this company was on the brink of bankruptcy. They took the flight and were stranded, and so they had no information that would have protected them.

This actually makes me wonder – even if the Commission has said that it has the information and is publishing it, that there is an obligation to publish it – why this, for example, was not known. Do we actually have a guarantee that everything that passengers need to know, everything that is required, is always passed on? I would like to have an answer to this generally in the debate.

Eva Lichtenberger, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, Parliament showed a lot of initiative when it came to drawing up this blacklist. This was done in a responsible manner

too, which means that it provides the highest possible level of safety for consumers. However – and this is also an issue now – we need to check whether it has really worked well enough in the current situation.

The first question that I would like to ask about this is as follows. It is possible to access information over the Internet, but it is not always very easy with the different airlines. I have tried this out for myself. You cannot always immediately find information, for example, on connecting flights which require you to land in a third country. So here we have a problem then.

The second open question, and this would be of interest to me: what experiences have people had with wet leasing? Here, there have been serious concerns that it could become a loophole for enterprises which are not very reputable. Have there been any positive or negative developments with regard to this?

Third, and this is a very important point: has this way of regulating companies through the blacklist had a preventative effect on airlines, so that they – non-European ones in particular – have followed safety regulations more closely? How does the selective authorisation of a few aircraft belonging to certain airlines work, where we only allow them to use certain aircraft to come to Europe?

Ryszard Czarnecki, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Madam President, Mr Piebalgs, I hope, but am by no means sure, that the effects of the volcanic eruption in Iceland will not, by any chance, be shifted onto European passengers, if we are talking about ticket prices. For you are, indeed, right that these stoppages in air transport will probably be offset by higher ticket prices. It is worth saying this, in defence of the interests of the European consumer. The European Parliament is speaking on this matter yet again. This shows what importance we attach to the matter. I spoke about this a couple of months ago. Many of you also spoke then, and I remember the previous parliamentary term, when we spoke very openly about this, too. After everything that has been said, I have a personal reflection. A journalist from the most influential newspaper in Poland asked me, 'What do you people do in the European Parliament? After all, it is such an unimportant issue.' Only now have the media begun to be aware that it is a very important question, a question of security and an absolutely fundamental question from the point of view of the interests of European citizens, taxpayers, voters and consumers.

It is not normal that we know what the blacklist in the European Union is like, but we do not know what it is like outside the European Union. This is a completely schizophrenic situation.

Now to the final and very important matter: it must not be that European passengers pay extra for security – this is, after all, a matter for states and governments.

Mathieu Grosch (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, seen in this way, the blacklist was an interesting achievement of this Parliament under the leadership of Mrs De Veyrac and her colleagues from the previous legislative term.

The blacklist can affect companies, countries or aircraft, and I believe that in connection with this, the Commission should provide somewhat more detailed answers to the questions that have been raised, particularly as regards the extent to which companies have a say in decision making in different countries, and why this procedure takes place in connection with individual aircraft.

Further development is also important for us. We have already explained in the debate a few years ago that it remains important to us for the Commission to improve follow-up on these acts and measures in communications, at least with Parliament. This is because there are certain questions which remain open for us, not least the monitoring of the airlines, as well as the question of aircraft which could suddenly fly under a different name at some point, and regarding the fact that today, a certain level of transparency is required for those decisions in particular which could be taken at the last minute.

With that, I come to the point which is most important for me: information. All in all, we are of the opinion – and I think that this is true across the groups – that citizens and passengers have the right, and there should accordingly be an obligation, for the companies to inform them systematically that information regarding the blacklist can be obtained at airports without any problems, as well as at travel agencies, and that, especially when flying to 'certain countries' which are already known for problems today, travel agencies indicate which companies are problematic when rebookings are being made.

For us, the aim is that this measure, which has now essentially already improved safety, is not just extended to Europe and European passengers, but is adopted worldwide.

Fiona Hall (ALDE). – Madam President, I would like to raise an issue which is closely linked to aviation safety and which underlines the need to make the operation of the EU blacklist as effective as possible.

In December 2008, the Council finally adopted the EU Code of Conduct on arms transfers. This code controls the export from the EU of military technology and equipment. However, a concern persists that not all EU arms-exporting countries are abiding by the code and that European arms are still being supplied to conflict zones.

But one measure has been shown to be very effective in curtailing the illegal supply of arms, and that is the EU aviation blacklist. A Swedish study in 2008 showed that the air cargo operators who are involved in arms transfers to conflict zones are the same operators who habitually violate air safety standards.

Maybe it is not surprising that dodgy operators with a lax approach to safety should also be revealed as dodgy operators as far as the cargoes they carry are concerned. But the happy consequence of this link is that the measures to ensure strict control of aircraft, measures which are designed to protect European citizens, are also helping to protect the citizens of other continents, especially Africa, from the destruction that takes place when conflicts are fuelled by abundantly available small arms and light weaponry.

So I would ask Commissioner Piebalgs as Development Commissioner if he could add his personal weight to the Commission's efforts to ensure that the blacklists are implemented effectively and systematically.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) The blacklist of unsafe air carriers is a measure for protecting European passengers which I very warmly welcome. The list must be well publicised by both the European Commission and Member States, and especially by tourism agencies. In actual fact, it all boils down to the good faith and good will of tour operators and travel agents.

On the other hand, a solution needs to be found for the scenario where a particular destination is only served by unsafe air carriers. A large number of the carriers on the blacklist serve destinations in developing or underdeveloped countries in Africa, South-East Asia and Central Asia. This begs a valid question: To what extent can fair competition still be guaranteed between large European, US and Far Eastern air carriers and small transport companies that have been set up in these developing countries?

In this respect, I believe that we need to consider how the European Union could support their development through improving the safety and security of their flights, rather than excluding them from the market via a ban. This would enable the European Union to fulfil a duty of honour by supporting the sustainable development of the air transport sector in these less advantaged states as well.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to make a general comment and then ask two or three questions, depending on how much time you allow me. The general comment is as follows. I find it almost ludicrous that in the present situation, we, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, have received, in three air safety reports, a total of nine minutes of speaking time. Of course, there is the special session tomorrow, but I believe that it is about time for this House to pay more attention to things that really affect people, and perhaps to cut back somewhat on debates whose value has been artificially inflated.

As for the questions themselves, Commissioner – for me the most important is: what is the situation with regard to code-share flights – these aircraft that are meant to be flown by a European airline, but which can then be operated by some other airline, even one on the blacklist? What is happening here to inform people who need to fly? This is a real burning issue for me, and I would expect you to answer it. I will leave it at that one question.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, now that we have addressed aviation safety – and we will also be speaking and voting on the European Aviation Safety Agency the day after tomorrow – I would like to take the opportunity to broach another problematic area.

People taking part in aviation sports in Austria and in other Member States are confronted with the fact that vitally important sets of rules for such sports are only available in English. The sportspeople concerned often speak excellent English; however, it is often not easy to understand a subject which is already complex in itself in a subject-specific jargon in another language. As a result, Member States then try to obtain expert opinions from the EU. This expenditure of time and effort would be avoidable, in my opinion, if the rules were available in the relevant languages. I am trying to make vitally important regulations for those taking part in aviation sports available in German and French too – that is, in the two more widely spoken working languages.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The blacklist, updated on 30 March this year, features 278 companies from 17 countries. The EU must develop its technical and administrative capabilities in order to ensure compliance with the necessary civil aviation standards so that only airlines which comply with international security regulations can fly in the European Union. At the same time, however, we must also help third countries improve their civil aviation safety standards.

Competent third country authorities need to improve their ability to monitor the air carriers they grant licences to. The flight safety analysis conducted in the European Union for third country operators will also include checks carried out on the ground on these companies' aircraft, bearing in mind the evidence showing serious incidents and accidents suffered by carriers last year. However, information must be provided to passengers during their whole itinerary, including about all the companies which they are using to make this trip. This information should be provided no later than at the time of purchasing the ticket.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, I would like to thank you for the questions. It has definitely demonstrated that this House is very strongly behind the blacklist approach. I can promise, on behalf of Vice-President Kallas, that we will improve communication with Parliament on these issues.

I can also promise that all the questions that have been asked will be forwarded for a written answer because if I follow up with answers to the questions, I will definitely not be able to do so in the remaining one and a half minutes. I will, therefore, cover some of them but not because I would not be able to answer all the questions asked.

Firstly, international aspects: the Commission works in directions such as making every possible effort to strengthen international cooperation with third countries by encouraging States to join the safety assessment of a foreign aircraft programme which encompasses all the 40 states in Europe, but also through technical assistance projects to achieve the worldwide standards.

We also work very much with ICAO. We participated in the ICAO High-level Safety conference at the end of March in Montreal and also we are currently negotiating a Memorandum of Cooperation allowing further cooperation with ICAO. You are right; we need a global approach to this issue, but we should not underestimate the results that a blacklist approach makes on other countries.

I will mention an example from Indonesia that was asked of me. Indonesia has invested a lot of effort to modernise its aviation system, including its legislation, the organisation of the authority and, by doing so, the procedures for certification, an oversight of the airlines established in this country. To date, it has demonstrated that it has achieved significant improvement in the case of four air carriers: Garuda, Airfast, Mandala and Premier. That has been achieved with the help of the Commission and also with the Member States and the industry. It is a process requiring adequate resources, but the Commission is very closely cooperating with these authorities and carriers in this country to allow further positive developments. Our approach definitely encourages countries to change their approach to aviation safety, and that is only one example.

I shall end with a particularly important issue raised, that of consumer information. We require the travel agents to inform orally and/or in writing passengers at the time of reservation. Also, travel agents often require that if passengers agree to travel with a banned carrier, they renounce any rights to claim compensation later, but I will be happy to answer all the questions also in writing because I see that I am using up your kindness, Madam President.

President. – The debate is closed.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to speak in accordance with Rule 173 of the Rules of Procedure because of an incident which took place here a few minutes ago, and indeed during the item of the agenda for one-minute speeches. At the point when you called on Hans-Peter Martin, while he was actually here, he wandered past us. In response to our humorous question of whether he had slept through his own speech, Mr Martin adopted a particular stance here, clicked his heels and gave the Hitler salute.

Madam President, this is unacceptable; this is a serious breach of the customs of the House in accordance with Rule 9, and I therefore implore you to issue the appropriate call to order against this improper and unacceptable behaviour. I would also ask you to check whether, in connection with this, this behaviour can be documented in the recording. This is unacceptable. Even if it was a supposedly humorous provocation, jokes of this kind have no place in this House.

President. - Many thanks for bringing this to our attention. We will look into this accordingly and see what happened.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Madam President, with reference to the questions asked by Mr Simpson, I would like to ask the Commission to explain what fresh principles and plans it has in connection with ensuring the safety of passengers from Member States who fly with airlines which make internal flights in airspace not subject to European Union jurisdiction and frequently violate regulations, thus endangering passengers. I suggest the Commission, through the efforts of the High Representative, should develop an international agreement on this matter, which would be a guarantee of our common security. In addition, I would like the blacklist to make available precise information on the air carrier, which would contain comprehensive data and statistics and would show the risks, both in terms of safety and of comfort, to which passengers are exposed.

Artur Zasada (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Today's discussion is unquestionably a crucial one for the safety of passengers who travel by air in the European Union. I am pleased with the fact that EU Member States are observing ICAO standards in the area of the principles and techniques of international air traffic. It is obvious, however, that air transport is not restricted exclusively to European Union air space. A question, therefore, arises: how can we ensure the safety of EU citizens outside EU territory? In my opinion, the European Commission should stimulate countries which do not belong to the Community to work together to create a blacklist based on EU standards, or should also play a leading role in creating a global blacklist. In addition, I would like to draw attention to a possible problem: when the Commission monitors an air carrier which is on the blacklist, does it also monitor in detail the whole fleet which belongs to the carrier? For it may happen that an aeroplane will not be used by an air carrier which is on the blacklist, but it will be used, for example, by another company under different livery which charts individual aircraft.

18. Aviation security charges (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mr Leichtfried, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on aviation security charges (COM(2009)0217 – C7-0038/2009 – 2009/0063(COD)) (A7-0035/2010).

Jörg Leichtfried, rapporteur. – (DE) Madam President, at the moment, in the area of European aviation security and aviation security charges, we have a situation in which everyone does what they want. No one really does it properly. However, we will have to pay for this. This is something that we really should not take lying down, and this report aims to change things. What specifically will it change, and what does it aim to change?

I would just like to say in advance that on almost all points – and I would like to thank my fellow Member – there is a unanimous perception that the report could bring more transparency. Transparency means that on the one hand, airlines will, in future, be able to obtain information allowing them to understand what security charges will be applied to them by airports, what they are for, whether they are too much – which still sometimes happens at the moment – and, as the next step, that passengers too, of course, will be able to understand what airlines require from them. Here too, I have the suspicion that the transparency of the airlines is sometimes intentionally restricted, even when, as they say, they make a great effort to be transparent.

One point which is very important in this regard is the fact that, across Europe, there are various different systems for financing security facilities. There are states which have financed them purely through taxation. There are states in which only the end-user pays, and there are others which have a mixed system.

Our intention was to ensure that these systems could be retained. We do not want to prescribe to any Member State how security charges should be financed; we only want to ensure that whoever pays ultimately knows what he has paid.

There are, or were, different ideas about which airports should be included, and we have decided that it is a question of security. It is not about earnings and not about profits; it is about security. Therefore, we have decided that all airports that are commercially run must be included, and I think that that was the correct decision too.

Finally, we have reached a point where we have a great deal of unanimity here in plenary, namely on the point that we should make a distinction between charges for security facilities, security measures included in the EU rules, and charges for security measures which go beyond that – what are referred to as the ‘more stringent measures’.

We say that everything that falls within the EU context will stay as it is; each Member State can do what it considers right. If, however, security measures going above and beyond that are taken, then those Member States have to finance this themselves. On the one hand, this should ensure that it will be dealt with carefully, that security measures will not just be taken immediately without considering whether they are really necessary and that it will also be taken into consideration what this means for passengers and what it means for airlines and airports.

On the other hand, it should also be ensured that, in this regard, we also apply the principle that security is a public duty as well. Attacks on airlines are, as a rule, not directed at airlines, but at the states from which these airlines come, and therefore we also think that, in principle, security is still a public duty, and therefore must also be financed publicly.

I would briefly like to say something more on the amendments, which have reached an unbelievably high number – three in total. I think that they are all very justified and well-founded. I would say, particularly concerning the two amendments by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, that they are very much worth supporting, not because Mrs Lichtenberger is sitting next to me, but because they contain social requirements for employees at airports. I think that that is very important, particularly at times when airlines and airports are under pressure.

Andris Piebalgs, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, the proposal for a directive on aviation security charges is the result of the debate on financing aviation security which has been on the table since 2001. It follows on from the rising security costs observed subsequent to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, and from the establishment of an EU regulatory framework for aviation security.

By its legislative proposal, the Commission intends to set up a transparent and non-discriminatory framework for levying aviation security charges in Europe. Furthermore, the Commission considers that aviation security charges should be set in consultation with airport users and should be cost-related. I would like to congratulate Mr Leichtfried for his fantastic work on this report and also to thank the Members of the TRAN Committee who also contributed to this report.

I believe that the report goes precisely in the direction of the Commission's intended goals, and I welcome the support it gives to the Commission's proposal in those regards.

I would just like to emphasise two specific issues which are dealt with in the report. Firstly, the report introduces what is really a new element, namely the important and sometimes very controversial question of who pays for aviation security. Well, the Commission's proposals did not address this issue, and the reason is that nearly all Member States insist that they are not in a position to take commitments in that regard, even though they acknowledge that public financing of aviation security should be permitted.

The choice, in our view, should therefore be left to the individual Member States, and thus be dealt with through subsidiarity.

With this in mind, and with respect to the position outlined in the report up for adoption, the Commission would like to note that Amendment 32, which would oblige Member States to finance more stringent measures, will give rise to intense discussions with the Council on this proposed directive. However, I am confident that the rapporteur knew all this, and expected this fight with the Council.

The second issue is more for clarification, and relates to the impact assessment to be undertaken in advance of any further aviation security measures being taken under the framework regulation. This is definitely a very justified measure, but I would like you to know that we already have some mechanisms in place and we should not overburden ourselves.

First, there is the Stakeholders' Advisory Group on Aviation Security which consists of air transport industry representatives among others, and it is fully involved in the conception of any proposed measures on aviation security.

Secondly, the regulatory procedure with scrutiny ensures that Parliament can exercise its right of veto if it deems appropriate.

Thank you very much for this excellent report. We look forward very much to working with the rapporteur and the Parliament and to further progress on this issue.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Madam President, I am sorry that I must burden the plenary session, but in accordance with Rule 151, I feel forced to make a personal remark. I was targeted a moment ago. This is typical if you live in Austria. There is a group there which, by international standards, is classified as far-right. They have party leaders who make certain gestures in the air and think nothing of it. These are also people that cannot bear to be beaten in democratic elections, and then refuse any form of handshake or contact. If you wave at them, they only see one thing: the thing that they have real experience of, the Hitler salute.

Of course, these are problems which simply show that my home country has unfortunately not succeeded in coming to terms with the past, that we will not just be dealing with one far-right party which is represented here, but soon with two. I would simply like to make it clear once again: we are the democrats. The far-right wingers sit over there. I am proud to belong to a political group that has managed to make a decisive contribution to the fact that we no longer have a far-right group in this Parliament and hopefully will never get one. The answer is thus to have more democracy and not more far-right politics, hostility towards people and cynical contempt for people. Those are the men who have already said that I should seek psychiatric help because they could not bear to lose elections in a democratic manner.

President. – Blue card questions on a personal comment under Rule 151 are not permitted. Your request to speak on this point therefore cannot be accepted.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) This is a blue card question addressed to the previous speaker. I would like half a minute to ask a question.

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – Madam President, this intervention – which is totally acceptable – is interfering with a debate on a subject. I would suggest that you place this sort of thing in between the reports.

President. – Many thanks. We will now continue with the debate. I allowed the personal explanation because the previous point of order referred directly to Mr Martin. We will now go on with the debate and also devote our full attention to it.

Artur Zasada, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (PL) Madam President, at the outset, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Leichtfried, for a splendid report and for ideal cooperation during our work on this document.

We had to answer four questions, but first we had to state the task, which was protection of the interests of airline passengers, and this was the most important part of our work. However, the four questions we asked ourselves were a matter of answering a question about transparency, or which groups might be admitted to participate in the procedure. It was a question about the scope of the directive, or at which airports the directive can be applied. There was one very important question, about financing, which the Commission was not able to answer. However, together with Mr Leichtfried, we did manage to find a solution, and I thank him especially for this. I am talking about the more stringent measures, which should be financed by the Member States.

Another matter concerned the competence of the independent supervisory authority in establishing charges connected with air traffic security. During our work, we developed a common position, which I consider a very ambitious one. It is, today, a challenge for the Council and the Commission. I think that we, as airline passengers, and in contradistinction to the passengers of ships, cars and railways, should not have to pay for this kind of security. This is a gesture to the Council, it is a compromise position and I expect, today, an equally ambitious position from the Council.

Saïd El Khadraoui, on behalf of the S&D Group. – (NL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner, to begin with, I would like to thank the rapporteur for an excellent piece of work, some would even say a fantastic piece of work. Thank you, therefore, and thanks to those who have contributed to it.

Might I just remind you that the issue of funding is not a new one. This dossier has actually been in the making since the moment we adopted a European regulation on the application of security measures at European level in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001. Right from the outset, the European Parliament has always stressed that the funding issue is a serious one and that we have to find a European solution to it. However, the Council has always obstructed this. As a follow-up to this debate, we should again call on the Council to honour the agreements it has made with us in the past, particularly the one that would allow us to draft a separate proposal on this issue, and to commit itself to working with us towards a solution.

Obviously, we need to bear in mind a few considerations. The first and the most essential one is transparency. At the moment, we are not looking into exactly who in each of the Member States should foot the bill. However, one thing we certainly *do* want is to organise a consultation on this issue, to reach agreements and then to stick to those agreements. In other words, what we want to see is the revenue generated by security charges actually being ploughed back into financing security measures and not, for example, into some sort of parking. That is essential and it should be clear that we must not budge on this issue.

A second important consideration is that we need to make a distinction between security measures which we all have agreed jointly at a European level, and other additional measures being taken individually by Member States. As far as the first consideration is concerned, the transparency rules are clear and they have to be applied. As far as the second one is concerned, we have to make it clear that the financial responsibility lies with Member States and that they are the ones that have to foot the bill for additional security measures. Coordinating security measures at a European level would also be a bonus and if Member States decide on their own to introduce body scans or whatever, well, they will also have to bear the financial consequences of that.

Gesine Meissner, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, I would first like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Leichtfried, also on behalf of Mrs Hennis-Plasschaert. She cannot be here today. She arranged everything together with you, and was also completely satisfied.

We can also say that another thing that shows how good the report is is that there has been pretty unanimous voting in the Committee. This is also – just like the question for oral answer which was just raised – a question of protecting consumers, and it is also a question of aviation security. We want security to be in place; however, we also want consumers to know how much they are paying for what. It has already been pointed out that the systems in different Member States are very different, and we do not want to change that in general either. We do not want to impose anything. We do, however, want there to be transparency on how the costs are put together and on the proportion that is to be paid by the consumer. This is not always provided at the moment. That is, we want to know what proportion of the ticket price – at the moment it is just a proportion of the ticket price that is paid for security – is really relevant to security. Then we also want a guarantee that what is paid for security is also actually used for security, and that no one profits from it. I think that the approach that we have developed on this is also a completely logical one.

There is a critical sticking point between what Parliament would like and what the Member States think is good, and this is the question of who will pay for additional security measures taken which go beyond what we want in Europe for passengers. Here, we have said that actually, the Member States should do this. It is a question of national security in which the national states, too, must take a strong interest. Of course, the states do not want to pay for it. As has already been noted, with regard to the question of whether we want body scanners or not, we will undoubtedly also have to consider whether we want to have them throughout Europe or not, and who will eventually pay for them. Of course, we will also have to ask whether they really provide more security.

So, aviation security charges of this kind must be administered transparently.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Anna Rosbach, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Madam President, once upon a time, an airport was a place where you bought a ticket for a flight, checked in your baggage, showed your passport and took off or landed. Today, airports are more like a small town, offering all kinds of facilities – but with security measures that have made them something of a Fort Knox, and things are only moving in one direction: towards more and more of them.

Certainly, aircraft crashed in the old days, and unfortunately they still do. That is why it is important that the same rules apply both within and outside of the EU. In this context, the EU is too small to be an isolated island. This is an area where we can see the benefits of having the same rules, the same transparent rules, for aircraft from every country. That also applies to charges. Everyone – both passengers and airlines – needs to be clear as to what is covered by an aviation security charge. Nobody should be lost in a jungle of unclear charges and levies. Passengers need to know exactly what the charge covers, nor should they have to pay special national charges or pay extra for airlines. I wholeheartedly support the report by the Committee on Transport and Tourism ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Mathieu Grosch (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, first, I would like to thank the rapporteur, as well as the other groups, for their work. We had an interesting discussion in the Committee on Transport and Tourism. I am, however, of the opinion that we have already made many compromises with the Council, which has shown itself to be very unwilling to compromise here, just as it has in the past. For when we start to talk about implementation, that is when the discussion gets going. Here, we as Parliament should also expect the support of the Commission for the idea that security charges will apply to all airports. We should not repeat what we have already done in other areas – whether ground handling or aviation charges – that is, to allow for exceptions affecting two or five million passengers.

The second thing, and this is even more important for me, is, of course, to ensure transparency for passengers – who pays how much for what – and that is unequivocally a duty for the airports as well as the airlines. This is quite an important consideration in my view.

With that, I come to the third point, payment – an area in which there are always sticking points, of course. With regard to financing, personally, I am of the opinion that public security should be paid for with public funds. We are already compromising by leaving some things to so-called subsidiarity. This is always an effective trick here in the House, and also together with the Commission: if you cannot get a solution with the Council, then you simply call it a question of subsidiarity. Personally, I am not very happy about that, but there we are. Therefore, I think we should at least stick to what we have said here, namely that special measures, stricter measures, must definitely be paid for from the public purse. Security charges and security overall have increased significantly in recent years. Therefore, this dossier also has an economic aspect. We are now talking about around 30% of the costs. If we are talking about security and who pays for it, that will have an economic aspect tomorrow as well. Therefore, these three points are crucial for me. I hope that, at least with the current requests, we will get a positive result with the Council and the Commission.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The legislation being tabled offers a framework for setting aviation security charges which is transparent, non-discriminatory and allows the right of appeal. Airport security is the responsibility of Member States.

Passengers are the ones, however, who ultimately pay for security measures through the price of their ticket. This is why passengers are entitled to be told separately how much of the final ticket price is to pay for security.

The directive on aviation security charges and the directive on airport charges should be harmonised. Parliament has asked on repeated occasions for the aviation security charges specified in this directive to be used by companies and airport operators only for implementing aviation security measures. Parliament has also asked for transparency and a correlation of the security taxes and charges with the objectives being pursued.

Member States can also apply tighter security measures, the cost of which, however, will be borne entirely by Member States. These security measures should not, all the same, impede the smooth flow of passenger traffic at airports. Unfortunately, here in Brussels in particular, we encounter endless queues which passengers stand in to be able to travel.

I would also like to mention the ban on bringing liquids on board. This means that various items can be confiscated. Unfortunately, at Brussels airport, for example, there is a long-winded procedure involving both additional charges and the confiscation of items. Regrettably, this procedure does not include the option of receiving the item later at the addressee's address.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) The introduction of security charges has brought a new financial cost to the aviation market, which airport operators and airlines will immediately and adroitly pass on to passengers.

It is therefore right to look for mechanisms to protect passengers in order to prevent fictitious amounts concealed as security charges being added in a non-transparent way as well-hidden items, with the aim of generating unjustified profits for crafty entrepreneurs in the aviation sector. The level of these charges should correspond only to costs demonstrably incurred in securing the safety of passengers.

Our duty, Commissioner, is therefore to define clear and transparent rules – rules which will eliminate the current anarchy in this sector and prevent operators in future from exploiting mandatory measures for the protection of passengers in order to make unjustified profits.

It is necessary to define rules, and not to establish more institutions and authorities which will burden passengers, airline operators and also taxpayers with yet more additional costs.

Commissioner, if we want to help Europe become competitive, we must forget about setting up new authorities. Authorities do not create the added value which can raise living standards for our citizens. Thank you for your attention.

President. – We had a technical problem here, so it was somewhat longer than a minute. However, the clock is now working again, and hopefully everything should now go according to the set timetable.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, the effects of the volcano ash cloud on Europe's airspace, which, as is well known, caused many thousands of flights to be cancelled, are a good example of why aviation security is important. There is already a big argument over who should cover the costs arising from this – who should pay for the natural disaster, so to speak – and to what extent the restrictions are justified. While transport ministers are agonising over this, we must decide which costs relating to anti-terror security regulations, which are becoming more and more restrictive, can be passed on to passengers. In the end, the costs of a task to be undertaken by the state, namely the maintenance of public safety, cannot simply be shifted on to the citizens like this. Only if countries themselves have to take financial responsibility for the strict security measures which have been prescribed can we prevent the possibility of a wild increase in the number of body scanners and other rather ridiculous security measures.

While we are still struggling with the SWIFT agreement, the US is concluding agreements, in the name of fighting terror, to exchange passenger data with the European Commission and the various aviation organisations. Furthermore, the fact that the lack of air traffic controllers and their growing workload could have fatal effects on aviation safety was pushed into the background in the discussion. Since the liberalisation of the 1990s and the vision of a unified European airspace, it has mainly been costs, and not so much safety, that seem to be at the forefront of consideration. What is clear is that the ash cloud has only delayed the pilots' strike which has been announced. So one might take an ironic view of this: hopefully, we will not go from one chaotic aviation situation to another.

Christine De Veyrac (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, I, too, would like to congratulate our rapporteur, Mr Leichtfried, on his text and his spirit of cooperation on this matter, and I particularly support his proposals on the financing of aviation security, since we are discussing aviation security here, and not air safety.

Our committee has been fighting for many years to gain acceptance for the principle that the most stringent security measures should be funded by the Member States, and I fully support our rapporteur on this point. In fact, security does not concern only travellers, but all citizens, and it is the states' responsibility to take counterterrorism measures.

It is therefore not justifiable to make air passengers alone bear the cost of security measures in airports and on board aeroplanes, all the more so since, on means of transport such as trains and ships, security measures are financed by the states, either partly or fully, as appropriate. I therefore think that we need to stand up to the Council and defend to the bitter end Amendment 32 of the report adopted by the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

I would like to quickly raise another point. While I support the progress that the text will bring in the field of non-discrimination and transparency, I do not believe that the objective of this directive is to put in place a single and identical system for security charges in Europe.

While respecting the common rules, the Member States must be allowed to keep their current systems for levying charges. Thus, in states such as Spain, Italy or France, the charges are approved by their parliament and, in these cases, it is the authority responsible for investigating appeals to laws which must act as the independent supervisory authority. This is the subject of Amendment 40 which, I hope, a great number of you will support when we vote on it.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, despite the difficulties that have become cruelly obvious this week associated with the current lack of a single European sky and, more importantly, of a genuine single authority to control and manage that single sky, little by little, we are moving closer to the target that we set ourselves, and this text should be one more tool to help us along that road.

I am aware of the tenacity of the rapporteur, Mr Leichtfried, whom I congratulate on his work and also on his particular sensitivity to air transport and social issues. In this case, however, I feel that we might be falling prey to a degree of naivety and maximalism, and that by seeking perfection, we are running the risk of not achieving the best outcome.

While I am entirely in agreement with creating a common system, including an independent supervisory body with the ability to establish fair and transparent powers in relation to charges, and with taking into account environmental and social criteria and passenger protection, etc., I still think that some aspects are missing, which I would like the Commission to clarify. For example, I refer to what Mrs De Veyrac just said: I do not see a clear acknowledgement of the system by which a national parliament votes on charges by parliamentary agreement, as it is the body that has to apply them. I am also finding it difficult to see – and I would like the Commission to clarify this – how viable this text can be given the differences with the Council and, more importantly, the consistency, or lack of it, in my view, between this text and the general directive on airport charges.

Given the major uncertainty and disagreement over who is going to pay for this security – which I admit is public security – I think we need to make it clear that, when we talk about the Member States paying, it is the public in general who are going to pay. When we talk about Member States, it sounds like an abstract person, but it is not: it is every one of us citizens who travels, as well. I therefore fear that we will ultimately see very little progress.

I would therefore like the Commission to give its opinion on how it sees the future of this text.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) It is true that air transport is the safest out of every form of transport. However, aviation incidents with global ramifications, like the one which took place 10 days ago, or the chaos created by a volcanic eruption, make us face up to the issue of the whole safety and security chain in the aviation sector: airports, airlines, control towers, aircraft, crew and passengers. There needs to be a particularly close bond between all these links, along with open communication.

Passengers concerned about their own journey and comfort cannot understand the need for security measures, no matter how lax or tight they might be, and even the costs they incur, unless they are aware of the significance of such dramatic or tragic events as those of 11 September 2001. A terrorist threat, pilot error, technical defects, a misunderstanding between the pilot and control tower and unforeseen atmospheric conditions are all factors which must be predicted and stringent measures must be taken to apply the regulations both in spirit and according to the letter.

I agree with adopting exceptional measures in the scenarios already mentioned. However, these measures must be transparent. Passengers are entitled to and must enjoy a safe journey to the same extent as they are entitled to know the truth. Unfortunately, communication and transparency are features of the aviation security sector which need to be improved urgently. This is the task of airports and airlines which must become more open and transparent. On the other hand, passengers need to realise that they must be aware that the security measures applied at airports and onboard aircraft, no matter how stringent they might be, are ultimately for their benefit and their benefit alone.

Thomas Ulmer (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first I would like to thank Mr Leichtfried for an excellent report which contains good, sustainable proposals.

What, in the end, is the issue here? It is about strengthening transparency, consumer protection, security and coordination, as well as quality control. I would, however, advise against creating a new authority to deal with these questions. I take a positive view of the subsidiarity in the report, and it should definitely be retained. It is also very important for me that there should be a clear separation between taxes and charges, and all government tasks – whether fingerprinting and photographing, police tasks, fighting terrorism or something similar – must clearly be financed through taxation and not through consumer charges. If individual states then have a vital interest in taking security measures that go beyond this, then I think that, in this area, they also have the duty to bear the costs. Whoever orders government-related security measures also pays for them. I think it is different in the case of technical or personal security, which can certainly be passed on to the passenger, as long as its purpose is clearly declared.

It is worth noting, though, that in the impact assessment that the Commission has put before us, we are talking about a sum of around 0.1% of the total fare for these measures. We should therefore not start too high.

I believe that we are bringing about a sustainable compromise, including with the Federal Republic of Germany, which has considerable reservations here in the area of subsidiarity. I would hope that the end result is very close to our proposal.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE). – (CS) Although I fully support this proposal, because it greatly increases the transparency of rates and the calculation of security charges for all European consumers who use air transport, I am amazed that there is not more harmonisation in this important area. I am concerned that, because of the dominant position of certain airports, passengers will pay excessively high security charges with no direct impact on the level, speed or quality of security measures at check-in.

In its evaluation report for the two years after this directive entered into effect, the Commission should have been much more courageous and should have proposed a unified and binding method for calculating security charges throughout the EU.

I fully agree with the demand for more stringent measures, such as body scanners, to be financed by the state and not by passengers, especially as the debate is still continuing over the need for them and the associated health risks. Last but not least, I am concerned about the interpretation of the provisions on charging for the cost of security measures implemented not by airports but by the airline companies directly, as these costs may, on the contrary, be charged to passengers, and this, in my view, means there is a potential risk of abuse in the form of over-charging.

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – Madam President, Mr Leichtfried is right. The cost for extra security should, in the end, be covered by the Member States. After all, the passengers, and every citizen, are already paying the Member States for their security in general.

The state cannot simply say to its citizens, 'you get exactly what you pay for'. Its obligations go beyond that, because the state is not simply another service provider motivated exclusively by profit. I am reminding you of this simple truth because, in spite of this principle, the passengers and not their states are footing the bill for extra air security in the end, as the rapporteur rightly notes.

Moreover, many times the extra security that passengers are getting by paying extra charges is not even provided by the state, but by subcontracted private companies, often disregarding the passengers and their rights under the general shelter provided by the secrecy covering security matters in general. That simply should stop.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, given that aviation security charges within the EU have been dealt with in very different ways, I think it is important to apply an objective measure here. It would make a lot of sense to take a combination of the number of passengers and also maximum take-off weight as the basis for assessment. It is important, however, that there is a clear connection between the security charge levied and the services which are actually provided. It is important to define aviation security itself, and we must also know exactly what we are paying for. The exact way in which the security charges will be calculated must be comprehensible. Information on the size of the charges, and what they consist of, must be provided openly. Transparency is imperative here. For this, however, we need independent regulatory authorities in order to be able to counteract any distortion of competition quickly and efficiently.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, this debate on aviation security has been a fascinating one, and shows that we all have our own experiences in this field.

In my case, I lost all the cheese I wanted to bring because it was *tartinable*! I thought that excessive, but nevertheless believe that we have provided improvements throughout the system. The Commission proposal goes one step further because where there is security, there are also charges, and the first rule is transparency. The report and the Commission proposal strengthen each other.

On the question of who should collect the charges, my view is that subsidiarity is still the best way because, after all, it is not Member States, but citizens, that pay. The only question is whether it should be all taxpayers that pay or just those who are passengers.

That is not a simple question to answer, but I consider the subsidiarity aspect to our proposal to be in keeping with today's aviation security arrangements.

Parliament is going one step further, in looking at the whole of the aviation security sector. We will see where that debate leads. I believe the Commission has made a very decent proposal and am very glad that Parliament has broadly accepted it and is, as usual, going a little further than does the Commission proposal. I believe that the timing and scope of the proposal are correct.

Jörg Leichtfried, rapporteur. – (DE) Madam President, I am somewhat embarrassed after so much praise, and so I will keep it short. I would nevertheless like to take the opportunity to thank the rapporteurs and the

shadow rapporteurs, who have worked hard together: Mr Zasada, Mrs Hennis-Plasschaert, Mrs Lichtenberger and Mr Kohlíček. We have worked hard on this matter for nearly a year now. This is how I see European politics, not as a forum for bickering to provide a spectacle, as perhaps other fellow Members are doing.

Second, I would like to address the Council and make an appeal to them. The Committee on Transport and Tourism is actually a very amicable committee, a committee which works and argues in a businesslike manner, and in this spirit, we have very much met the Council half way on this law. From the start, we have been very willing to compromise. However, I would like to warn the Council to let sleeping dogs lie. If you are willing to compromise, then you must also be able to expect compromises from your opponents or partners.

If the Council is not at all willing to meet the European Parliament half way now, then the attitude of this committee will also change. This is not only my opinion. I have already heard from some colleagues that if the Council is not willing to meet us half way, then we will also discuss body scanners in quite a different light and perhaps also not be willing to meet the Council half way. This is something which is not in the interests of the matter as a whole and which absolutely must not happen. This is why I am appealing to the Council and the Member States to move on this. We now have the Treaty of Lisbon. Both the Council and the Member States must keep moving on this, otherwise we might once again hear: *Come on, let's SWIFT again!*

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the next plenary sitting in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Nessa Childers (S&D), in writing. – Mr Leichtfried should be commended for a thorough and conclusive report, which had dealt effectively with many of the issues left open by the Commission paper. However, there are some questions which remain unresolved and these issues should be viewed in a new context following the prolonged closure of European airspace. With the aviation industry set to lose upward of €1 billion as a result of the volcanic ash cloud, the EU must act quickly and decisively to ease the financial blow on the aviation industry. Though Commissioner Almunia must be applauded for his favourable comments on the crisis today, we as MEPs also have the opportunity through this report to aid an industry which has just been brought to its knees for the third time in the last ten years. This house and our colleagues in the European Council and Commission should begin to consider state funding to cover the proposed security costs, particularly in the event of a low passenger threshold not being passed. While these measures were not popular before the eruption last week, we are currently at the point where any missed opportunity to provide assistance to the aviation industry could prove to be fatal.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank Mr Leichtfried for his excellent work on the report on aviation security charges, which considers, among its various aspects, one important point: consumer protection and passengers' rights.

There have to be clear and transparent rules because, if airlines charge passengers extra for security measures, this information should be made available, in my view, to ensure that passengers are not out of pocket.

I believe that it is only right that consumer protection organisations should take part in the consultations and thus gain an insight into the pricing of security measures, which they can then check against the ticket price. Only in this way will it be possible to guarantee greater transparency and information for passengers.

19. Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (recast) (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mr Simpson, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (recast) (COM(2009)0391 – C7-0111/2009 – 2009/0110(COD)) (A7-0030/2010).

As Mr Simpson cannot be here, Mr El Khadraoui will speak on his behalf.

Saïd El Khadraoui, deputising for the rapporteur. – Madam President, the Chair of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, Mr Simpson, is not able to join us today and has asked me to read out his statement.

The recast on the development of the guidelines of the TEN-T network seeks to bring together the various amendments adopted over the years to the guidelines and to incorporate amendments that take account of the enlargement of the EU to 27 Member States.

To give a bit of background to the report, the guidelines give direction to the development of the Trans-European transport network. The objective is to establish the network gradually by 2020 by integrating land, sea and air transport infrastructure networks throughout the Union.

Turning back to the report at hand, it is, strictly speaking, a codification of the legislative text, but, because the Commission made some minor changes to the annex, they were forced to do it via the recast procedure. The changes to the annex are to correct initial mistakes that were made during the accession of the 10 new Member States that joined in 2004. The changes are not about updating the maps or making any substantive changes.

The two changes the rapporteur has introduced to the report involve minor modifications in the recitals and some technical corrections to the maps. These are in line with the changes made by the Council and in line with correcting the guidelines.

Following the Commission's advice, the decision was taken, both by Council and by Mr Simpson as rapporteur with the backing of the Transport Committee, not to make any substantive changes to the guidelines. The rapporteur is, however, aware that the Greens have retabled their own amendments seeking to update the line between Munich city and Munich airport, but the rapporteur would like to reiterate the point that the changes we are making in this report are about correcting the text, not updating it.

The point of this recast is to bring everything into order ahead of the real revision of the guidelines during early 2011. It is important to ensure the clarity of the guidelines in preparation for the more substantial changes that will take place next year. We are all eagerly awaiting the real revision of the guidelines and the chance to further develop the TEN-T network but, in order to get to that stage, we need to get the current legislation right, and that is what we have done here.

Andris Piebalgs, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I am very grateful to the speaker and rapporteur. This is exactly what we have been looking for, so that is why I have on this point nothing to add because I think it describes exactly what is at issue.

I will just concentrate on this measure revision, where we stand on it, because it is important to see it being the process. Based on the Green Paper of April 2009, the Commission has launched a public consultation with more than 300 answers and set up six expert groups, which help to work on the results of consultation in a new policy proposal.

In a very short time, there will be a proposal to the college, a document that will outline the methodology for establishing the new trans-European transport network. So we foresee that this could be presented to the college on 5 May.

Then this methodology will definitely be presented to this House and the Council. The Commission will then engage in the preparation of the proposals for the new TEN-T and its financing.

So, our expectation is that we will be able to adopt this in the college in the first semester in 2011. I am very grateful to Parliament for understanding the necessity for minor changes and I am looking forward to our having a very broad and strong debate on new outlines for the trans-European transport network in the months to come.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank those Members who, following the information imparted by the rapporteur and also by the shadow rapporteurs, have allowed the swift conclusion of the parliamentary process concerning this matter. They have desisted from tabling amendments which, although acceptable in terms of their content, would have been an obstacle to the adoption of this codifying text.

We are now in a position to give the Commission the basis for the programming of the TEN-T of the next decade. In a specific effort to make the timescales shorter, from the moment the rapporteurs took up this matter, they reached an agreement not to table amendments that were not agreed on with the Council. The Committee on Transport and Tourism has approved the technical modifications examined by the legal services of Parliament and of the Council, and the Council has stated that it can conclude at first reading if we vote along these lines, which is entirely acceptable.

The few changes made by the Committee on Transport and Tourism are consistent with this objective, and I regard them as appropriate and useful for presenting a coherent and accurate final text. Therefore, I support the amendments tabled, although I do not consider appropriate at this time the amendment tabled by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, which has already been rejected in the vote within the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

Although the content of the amendment – namely the modification of a map relating to Munich Airport – is acceptable, there will be an opportunity to table it again during the review of the TEN-T, which could even take place by summer, since the work in the European Commission is progressing quickly.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (RO) This technical document allows Annex I to be updated by including the maps of all Member States and the target deadline to be changed to 2020. The in-depth debate on updating the list of TEN-T projects is planned for the end of the year. This list should include the development of Black Sea maritime corridors, road links with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as the extension of the current priority projects 6 and 17 so that the high-speed railway line can reach Bucharest and Constanța.

The eruption of the volcano in Iceland has highlighted to us the weakness of the European transport system. The European Union ought to have had an efficient system for redirecting passengers to other forms of transport. It is becoming absolutely vital for a trans-European transport network to be developed so that high-speed railway lines can serve not only all the Member States' capitals but other large European cities as well. Another increasingly important aspect is the development of transport along inland waterways and the European maritime corridors.

Eva Lichtenberger, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, the trans-European networks are a topic which is keeping us busy in this plenary session, and which should keep us even more busy. We now have a recast, and some people – Mr Silvestris, for example – have been surprised that the Greens have put forward amendments proposing changes to the list of the trans-European networks, or what is considered to form part of this.

They must not forget that what we have suggested involves a special case: namely where the Member State itself has said that this part of the trans-European networks is only a feeder and will therefore no longer be relevant for us; this famous flight path – now I am talking like Mr Stoiber; I think this is contagious, and quite dangerous – is something we do not want to build any more; one would, so to speak, have built a feeder to Munich Airport. This is the reason for our amendment, therefore.

I also generally think, however, that we should apply ourselves with particular care to revising the trans-European networks, and we should consider a point which is particularly important to me. There is a study by a Dutch person – I will gladly pass it on to the Commissioner, when he is here – which, for me, is very relevant for the coming debate, and which shows that the costs of a large project – and it very often involves large projects – are, as a rule, underestimated by an average of 45%, and their benefit is always overestimated, since that is needed in order to implement the project. That means that we must completely rethink the cost estimate for trans-European projects, and I would call on you to do that. It is our responsibility to give our citizens good, clear information.

Jaroslav Paška, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (SK) The definition of trans-European transport networks is a fundamental step towards improving transport connections for residential and industrial areas across Europe.

While in the North, West and South of Europe, railways and roads terminate at sea ports, roads and railways in the East have the enormous potential to continue eastwards across the whole of Asia to the shores of the Pacific.

Asian countries such as China, Japan and India are experiencing significant economic growth and are becoming major trading partners for European companies. It is therefore necessary, along with the construction of an internal European transport structure, to also open up transport routes to the East.

The broad-gauge railway line from Vladivostok reaches the border of the EU at Čierna nad Tisou. A project has been drawn up for this line to be continued to Vienna, linking it to the Danube, to the ports and, of course, to the European network.

In my opinion, projects such as this should also receive very significant support in the future. Thank you.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, yes, I rather prefer ‘non-attached’. Even though, at this point, we are only talking about a recasting of the guidelines, I would nevertheless like to take the opportunity to mention a project that is particularly problematic for Austria. The Brenner Base Tunnel is part of the high-speed rail axis from Berlin to Palermo and the trans-European transport network programme and it is intended to cross under the Innsbruck to Bozen axis.

The current situation is that the EU has left Austria, Tyrol, northern Italy and also southern Germany in a state of uncertainty and there is a risk of the tunnel becoming a black hole for billions of euros. The original cost estimate of EUR 4.5 billion from 2002 has long since been exceeded and experts expect higher construction costs in the region of EUR 16 billion. Moreover, the financing has still not been clarified. In principle, the project is supposed to be financed partly by the Member States concerned and partly by the EU. However, the EU refuses to make a legally binding promise for the period after 2013 and, as a result, is leaving the aforementioned countries in a state of uncertainty.

That is not all, however. Of course, in order to ensure that the tunnel is fully utilised, appropriate feeder lines also need to be established. The catchment area concerned stretches from Munich in the north to Verona in the south and, in this regard, the financing is totally unclear, including on the Italian side. My request is therefore that, when the TEN projects are launched, they must not be subject to insufficient planning by one party, leaving the Member States concerned to foot the bill. The EU must accept at least 50% of the costs, and the planning and the promises must be forthcoming with due speed.

Werner Kuhn (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, these guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport networks initially sound very technical. However, the rapporteur, Mr Simpson, has already pointed out that they are, of course, vital from the point of view of future economic development in Europe.

Roads are the arteries of our economy. That is something on which we all agree. We also have to acknowledge time and again that, as an economic and trading centre, Europe is in competition with the large economic and trading centres of America and South-East Asia. It is therefore necessary for us to develop our inland transport systems for the domestic market while, on the other hand, of course also linking Europe's export capacity with the development of the trans-European networks and continuing to strengthen them further.

The purpose of traffic arteries is to take up originating traffic and turn it into terminating traffic and ultimately, to take it to where the customers are. The big issue in this regard is, of course, that the development of major traffic axes is also intended to provide access to the area and thus has an economic development role – we really must not forget that. Europe is a continent that has very many coastlines and very large ports and these ports need to be linked together – in this regard, mobility is essential. However, we must not simply take a ‘just-in-time’ approach. We also need to work in a cost-effective, environmentally sound and environmentally friendly way. This will be particularly important in future.

An absolutely crucial question will be: can we turn the north-south and east-west links that we currently have in terms of rail, road and inland waterway systems into a real network, because we have to acknowledge that there are bottlenecks here that we need to get round. In this regard, there are, of course, certain things that need to be taken into account. When it comes to the longest trans-European axis – from Palermo to Berlin – this should be extended further via Rostock in the direction of Scandinavia. These are things that we will need to take into account in future.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, the text that we are concerned with today updates and consolidates the procedure for establishing trans-European networks, to prepare us for the definitive launch of the penultimate and final phases of the review, now in a Europe of 27 that is richer and more spatially complex and which has new, innovative mobility needs.

The Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency is now almost fully up and running, we have almost all the coordinators for the corridors, and we hope that soon, we will have the remaining ones so that they can promote the corridors that we need.

Our neighbours, especially in the Mediterranean, also have enormous expectations regarding these networks and their own networks, and we are looking forward to receiving the communication that the Commission has promised us on the methodology, which will complement the consultation and the debates, before starting work on one of the most exciting exercises for our Committee on Transport and Tourism.

The mobility and cohesion network is becoming a reality and, for the first time, it will connect the EU-27 common area in an integrated and dynamic way. It will identify the essential hubs – ports, airports and logistical hubs – overcoming the border barriers. It will include, among other things – if you will allow me to mention it – breaking through the centre of the historical barrier of the Pyrenees with a low-level tunnel. It will thus achieve a plan for the future of 21st-century Europe that has such strength of conviction that it will secure the necessary funding.

That is our challenge, but for now, we will be more humble and limit ourselves to approving this first legislative polishing exercise, for which I would like to congratulate our Chair, Mr Simpson.

Michael Cramer (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the Transrapid system should not be included in these guidelines. It does not fit into the European landscape. It does not reduce the differences between the systems that we currently have; it increases them. We have paid out billions to create a uniform system, and here billions are being paid out at national level to counteract that. That cannot be allowed to happen!

Although the European Parliament had previously come out against the Transrapid system, it suddenly reappeared in 1996 as a project between Berlin and Hamburg. It then suddenly disappeared again – and no one knows why. In 2004, the Transrapid link between Munich airport and Munich Central Station appeared just as suddenly. That was then halted in Germany, with the additional support of the State Government of Bavaria. There was agreement about scrapping this project – no one wanted it any more. That is why it must no longer be included in these guidelines.

After leaving office, the former Minister-President of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, was appointed to campaign for a reduction in bureaucracy here in Europe. That is his responsibility. He is also the one who now has to take the decision that this Transrapid system does not belong in these guidelines. That is something that we should all take note of. We must get rid of this Transrapid system. It was a nice model from a scientific perspective, but it has no place in Europe. It does not belong here and, as such, does not belong in these guidelines.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Simpson, and, at the same time, express my regret that he cannot be with us here today. We will manage, nevertheless. I would particularly like to express my congratulations for taking the approach of essentially leaving things as they are in these guidelines, because there is one principle that is very important, namely reliability and calculability on the part of the European legislator. That is certainly fulfilled with this report.

Secondly, I would like to mention that we also need a proposal for the future when we can once again decide what is really part of the TEN system and what is not. We could conduct the debate in the way that it is, to a certain extent, already being conducted. Some people are arguing charismatically in favour of linking a boot with an island and the others say that that absolutely must not be included. However, that is the wrong way to go about it. We need to look at what adds value for the European Union and European taxpayers. Moreover, support should clearly be provided in places where the Member States are already doing something, where something is happening, because then, something really will happen and we will not have a situation where TEN plans are made that are then never implemented. European citizens and passengers will benefit, as will those Member States that commit themselves ultimately to moving traffic away from the roads and on to the rail system.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Madam President, as a result of the fall of the Iron Curtain and of Central European integration, the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor is, as we know, currently regaining the importance that it had before the collapse of the Danube Monarchy. The EU has, of course, already confirmed the importance of the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor by giving priority status to the northern part from Gdańsk to the Czech Republic. However, it would be even more important to also give the development of the southern part via the Austrian Southern Railway to Italy the same level of priority.

In this network, in particular, which carries half of all goods and passengers, we need to neutralise a dangerous bottleneck situation. Only the Koralm Tunnel will be able to permanently eliminate the barrier posed by this bottleneck.

The people living along the transit routes are, as we all know, paying a high, and rising, price for the increasing volume of traffic. Only the complete development of this southern corridor will lead to the sort of switch

from the road to the rail system that could not be expected to be achieved by any other infrastructure measures in Austria.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) At the moment when all the air traffic throughout Europe is experiencing severe disruption due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland, the need to develop pan-European transport networks is even more obvious than ever.

The European Union should be giving particular support to the development of the transport infrastructure and its interconnection with the main European transport routes in the countries which have joined the EU in recent years. Romania has three pan-European corridors crossing its territory, 4, 7 and 9, which are all closely linked to the Black Sea port city of Constanța. I feel that particular attention must be focused on corridor 7.

The Danube is part of the main trans-European Rhine-Main-Danube transport waterway, which links the North Sea and Black Sea via the ports of Rotterdam and Constanța. It could provide Europe with a proper transport backbone. However, cooperation must be established in order to raise the profile of these transport corridors as soon as possible.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE). – (DE) Madam President, the trans-European networks are indeed utilised for regular traffic in Europe. We could even say that the traffic is the absolute backbone of the entire European internal market, which is, of course, one of our main aims in Europe. Therefore, we absolutely must take care to ensure that all corridors are indeed developed and to discover where there is a need for financing and where the EU should concentrate its efforts.

Of course, it is clear that there are always national interests. We have seen it already today: some people talked about the Danube, others talked, in particular, about southern Europe and others still talked about the Brenner Base Tunnel. These traffic corridors are found all over Europe. The aim is for them to be generally continuous throughout Europe so that not only goods, but also people, can be transported from A to B. That is the task facing us. As I said before, it is natural for each of us to attach importance to our own regional requirements. We need to make sure that we avoid bottlenecks and, above all, that we have a truly functional network for all means of transport. That is what it is all about, and that is also what we will debate accordingly.

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, during this debate, the Brenner Base Tunnel and the new rail route from Munich to Verona have also been mentioned. Currently, around 50 million tonnes of goods are transported by road on this route and so this tunnel is urgently needed. However, it has also been said today in this Chamber that on both sides of the Brenner – in both Austria and Italy – it is difficult to finance the project. Financing on the Italian side would easily be possible by reallocating the revenue from the road tolls, from the Brenner motorway, to fund the rail route. For this to happen, however, it would be necessary for the concession for the Brenner motorway not to be put out to tender – as is the current intention as a result of pressure from Europe – but for the Italian State to be given the opportunity to extend this concession for at least another 50 years instead of it being awarded to private tenderers. Otherwise, there will be no cross-financing, which would mean that it would be extremely unlikely for the TEN route to be developed on the Italian side.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, Parliament is going to adopt this recast on the trans-European networks, and I would like the Commission to tell me as specifically as possible when we are going to be able to have access to the communication on the methodology.

As you know, Commissioner, this is one of the Spanish Presidency's priorities, and we are now crossing the half-way mark. I would therefore like to know as specifically as possible when we will be able to have this text, as Parliament is going to adopt the recast now and will therefore be free to examine this new text.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, again I would like to thank the Committee on Transport and Tourism for its support for this technical recast and I hope that the vote in plenary will confirm it.

Today's debate was on a broader scale and it will help to propose a methodology. Commission Vice-President Kallas will send the proposal to the college on 5 May. It took a bit of time because this new Commission has not been in place for long, and it takes some time for the new college to prepare proposals.

What I take away from this debate is that this House very strongly supports trans-European network policy. I believe that without a well-interconnected infrastructure, in transport or in energy or in telecommunications, it is very difficult to speak about Europe. I believe this debate will help us to shape our proposal for

methodology, which basically means that the Committee on Transport will have a chance to speak about it if everything goes well in May.

Saïd El Khadraoui, *deputising for the rapporteur*. – Madam President, I would just like to thank the colleagues who have contributed to the debate today and reiterate my point that we are looking at correcting mistakes made in the past and not at making any substantive changes.

That will come later on with the real revision of the guidelines and, of course, we are looking forward to that debate. For this reason, the rapporteur, Mr Simpson, and myself, as coordinator for my group, will be instructing my own political group to vote against the amendment put forward by the Greens. We hope that the other political groups will be able to support us on this.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the next plenary sitting in Brussels.

20. Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018 (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Mr van Dalen, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018 (COM(2009)0008 – 2009/2095(INI)) (A7-0114/2010).

Peter van Dalen, *rapporteur*. – (NL) Madam President, one could talk at length about the European maritime transport policy. I am not going to do that and will concentrate instead on a couple of key points and core themes.

The first key point is the importance of the sector. Eighty per cent of world trade takes place via the sea and the European fleet accounts for 41% of that global market. Within the European market, 40% of all goods are transported by seagoing ships. This makes shipping a crucial economic sector and one that has to compete in the global market. When you understand this, the second key point follows automatically, and that is competition.

We know that many countries the world over support their maritime fleets in very diverse ways. If we were to allow this in Europe, then it would only take a few years before all our ships flagged out to countries such as Hong Kong or Singapore. That would not only be to the detriment of the fleet, but more than that, it would deal a blow to the entire maritime cluster. On-shore employment, in banks, shipyards, insurance companies, logistics companies, training and education institutions and in companies actively working on innovations and improvements to the fleets' environmental performance, would be dealt an insurmountable blow if our fleet were to leave us.

Because of these two key points, my report calls on Member States to continue to boost their flags. We are talking here about providing tax breaks, such as the tonnage tax system for ships and tax breaks for seafarers and shipowners. That is the only way we will be able to ensure that both the sector and the maritime clusters remain relevant in Europe in the long term.

I have a question in this connection for the Commissioner: when is the European Commission going to come up with rules for State aid to sea ports? That proposal is supposed to come in the autumn, but I do not know in the autumn of which year. What is important for me is that State aid is granted transparently and that there is good accountability. We should not embark on this by supporting stationary terminals any more than ports which are geographically very close to third countries. In both cases, that would be tantamount to flogging a dead horse.

In this connection, I have a comment on paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the English-language version of which talks about '*flags of convenience*'. For me, that is a misnomer and I would have preferred something like '*substandard*' ships. After all, what we do not want are flags and ships that circumvent minimum requirements for safety and social standards. We are talking about the quality of the flag and what we in Dutch call '*goedkope vlag*' is certainly not automatically synonymous with a '*flag of convenience*'.

To conclude, I would like to mention another key point and that is making the maritime sector attractive to young people. The population of Europe is increasingly an ageing one and so we need to do a lot more for our youth. It is never too early to start informing them about the maritime sector and sea shipping and I was

pleased to hear that shipowners are even visiting primary schools to inform young people about working at sea.

Those were some of the key points I wanted to make thus far and I will be happy to respond to any comments by members and the Commissioner when I wrap up the debate.

IN THE CHAIR: MR ROUČEK

Vice-President

Andris Piebalgs, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur for his excellent work on this politically very important issue.

The Maritime Transport Strategy until 2018 has been very much used in preparing the Commission's Europe 2020 strategy, and the process for a new White Paper on Transport is on its way. We can see that this transport strategy is at the forefront of major strategic developments in Europe.

Shipping is one of Europe's strengths, and it is only natural that we should capitalise on what we have built in the past, but it is important to also look into the future. Our main aim is to ensure and further increase the long-term sustainability and performance of European shipping. This means efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly maritime transport services. Maritime transport provides for high-quality jobs in Europe and fuels research and European industrial innovation.

We also have ambitious environmental goals, and the Commission has always emphasised the need for global solutions, especially on the reduction of greenhouse gases.

The main work on the strategy was carried out before the economic crisis. In view of the economic downturn, the strategy is still valid. In this context, an emphasis must lie on the maintenance and improvement of the international order. We are faced with threats like protectionism, unfair competition, substandard shipping or piracy. We must find better responses to these issues, namely through dialogue with major trading partners.

I welcome the conclusions reached by the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the report presented and can assure you that many of the issues are already being addressed by the Commission in various activities to implement the strategy, such as the proposal on reporting formalities for ships, an important element of the Common maritime transport space without barriers.

The Commission services have also started working on a Social Agenda for maritime transport as well as on the EU e-Maritime initiative, both of which the Commission intends to present in 2011.

I would also like to answer the point on State aid guidelines for shipping in 2010. On the one hand, the 2004 guidelines will not 'expire' in 2011, even if the Commission said that they 'will be reviewed within seven years'. On the other hand, the current crisis, with its severe consequences for shipping, calls for a very cautious approach.

With regard to the specific measures, we are currently preparing a detailed roadmap for implementation of this strategy, which we plan to publish this summer.

Georgios Koumoutsakos, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (EL) Mr President, the Commissioner's statement evinced a very positive response from me and I listened to it with a great deal of interest, because shipping is indeed a very important – I would say vital – sector for the European economy.

The European Union has every reason to safeguard the leading role which it plays in this economic sector and to maintain a high standard of maritime transport. This is the challenge: to maintain our leading role in the global shipping market, which is why we need an effective and coordinated maritime transport strategy.

The report we are debating today, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority in the competent committee, is a detailed report which moves in the right direction, and I consider that, even as it now stands, without changes and amendments, the text responds fully to the need for us to move along a specific fixed line in the direction I referred to earlier.

Of course, European shipping faces huge challenges at present, as well as an exogenous challenge. The first challenge is the need to increase competition. It is a fact that free competition is the life blood of shipping. At the same time, however, State aid is often needed, because we frequently have to cope with unfair competition from third countries.

So the conclusion is this: State aid must be kept, because it has helped to maintain the competitiveness of European shipping and of the economy of the Member States. The second challenge we face is the need to strengthen and improve vocational training of human resources in the shipping sector, because there has been a spectacular reduction in the number of young people entering the profession and there is a lack of trained seafarers.

We therefore need a dynamic policy. We must, without fail, address these two sectors and I believe that the report moves in the right direction.

Knut Fleckenstein, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, we very much welcome the fact that, in future, we will have a maritime strategy in the EU, even if we will have to wait a little longer for the vote. We assume that this report will be incorporated into the Future of Transport report and then into the White Paper.

Through the European Maritime Transport Strategy 2018, we are creating the framework to make the European maritime economy more competitive at international level, and in this strategy we have determined, firstly, that we want this framework to be set up on the basis of ecological standards and, secondly, that we want sensible global social standards for high quality shipping.

Let me briefly address three points. Firstly, shipping is an environmentally friendly transport sector and therefore, one of our aims was for this branch of the economy to play its part in combating climate change in future, too. I am very much in favour of us creating incentives like the green ports, even if we do not make any decisions today but rather assign the Commission and the Council the task of finding out what is possible in this regard.

I believe it is just as important to maintain international competitiveness – including in respect of other modes of transport. It is therefore also right for the Commission, on the basis of our proposal, to once again carry out an impact assessment in respect of the sulphur emission control areas in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea because, if we want higher requirements here than elsewhere, we need to take international competition into account and ensure that, if possible, we do not cause the transport of containers to move back to the roads, which would be counterproductive.

Allow me to mention one last thing that I feel is particularly important, namely the inclusion of the major European ports in the planning of the TEN networks. This is of such enormous importance to us because the ports are important intersections in the transport chains and they can only perform their role effectively if intermodality is facilitated and reinforced.

There are numerous other points that I could mention here. Mr van Dalen, congratulations on this excellent report. We have all contributed a little to it and I would ask for your understanding for the fact that we do not want to spoil this excellent report by accepting your amendments.

Jean-Paul Besset, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance fully supports Mr van Dalen's report and recommendations. He offers us a balanced text which is the result of the close collaboration he managed to establish with the other political groups.

We endorse this report because it clearly sets out the challenges facing the EU's maritime policy, namely a significant increase in maritime traffic, both inside and outside the Union, without sacrificing the environment or social issues. This text is consistent with a rationale that we wish to see applied in all areas: a policy of sustainable development. It offers positive paths to allow maritime transport to develop between now and 2018 in the best possible conditions.

In particular, we highlight the fight against abuses of flags of convenience or substandard vessels. We also highlight protection against piracy. We highlight having a policy designed within the framework of a single European sea, and the importance ascribed to the multimodal linking of European sea ports with the hinterland. We highlight the support for simplification of the administrative rules governing entry and exit from European ports. We highlight the promotion of maritime occupations and continuous training for them. Lastly, we highlight the priority given to environmental issues.

On the whole, we will always support anything which, in our view, helps to promote a maritime transport sector which can compete with road and air transport. Mr van Dalen's report has taken full stock of the global environmental challenge, for which maritime transport is one of the solutions. In particular, it is a useful tool against global warming.

Our only regret is that the amendment that we tabled in order to integrate the maritime transport sector into the greenhouse gas emission allowance trading system has not been taken up by the rapporteur or by the Commission. From our point of view, no economic sector should depart from the general rule, and, as with the air and road sectors, maritime transport, even if it is only responsible for low gas emissions, must do its part to reduce them. We will therefore be retableting our amendment to plenary.

Jacky Hénin, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, to say that the Union needs a real maritime transport development strategy is putting it mildly, since this is a major issue for the future of our Union in terms of food, economic and political independence, as well as environmental protection.

In order to be effective, this strategy must be comprehensive and cover shipbuilding, ship repair, ports, employment and worker training, as well as safety. The rejection of the directive on the liberalisation of port services by Parliament in 2006 represents, in my view, the cornerstone of any European maritime transport strategy.

Parliament is calling on the Commission to continue its fight against abuses of flags of convenience. This is positive, but the fight has yet to really begin. Ultimately, it is not abuses of flags of convenience that we need to combat, but the very existence of this practice. Otherwise, all of our good intentions on safety, on job creation, are doomed.

It is a positive step to make State aid for this sector conditional on having to meet quality social and environmental criteria, and on promoting jobs and training for seafarers from EU Member States, since the only true distortions of competition do not result from State aid, but instead from social, wage and environmental dumping.

The best guarantee for the safety of maritime transport lies in having well-paid, well-trained crews who enjoy good social protection and good working conditions.

I am pleased to see that we are finally talking about lifelong training for seafarers and strengthening professional qualifications and skills. We must now ensure that this is recognised as a right for all seafarers and have employers finance it.

I also support the requirements for shipbuilding and steel quality. Of course, the text submitted to us takes a certain number of steps forwards, but it also still contains many contradictions. It remains imprisoned in the shackles of the dogma of free and undistorted competition. It is still too shaped by pressure from the shippers' lobby and by the worst ultraliberal utopian scenarios.

For example, how can it support employment for Europe's seafarers but also call for studies to determine to what extent the new technologies could replace them?

How can it defend a reduction in dumping practices, while seeking freedom of movement for employees who do not even have identical rights within the Union? How can it highlight safety when it is self-declaration that prevails, and when some parties, attracted by the smell of profit, have no hesitation in transporting goods which could turn out to be particularly hazardous for people and the environment, without declaring them?

There is still much work to be done, but we will do it together because a sound, high-level maritime policy must also and, above all, respect those tenacious men and women who often risk their lives to satisfy the needs of others.

Anna Rosbach, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Mr President, this is an ambitious strategy document. I have a couple of comments, however.

More freight on the EU's major rivers – great, but how do we take into account the fact that in recent years, water levels have often been too low for a fully laden barge to navigate them? If they sail only half-full, the freight costs are too high.

Risk-based controls – then how can we tell that a coal barge is smuggling people? Risk-based controls alone are not sufficient. It is naïve to expect all the maritime nations of the world to abide by the EU's high environmental standards. On the contrary, many old ships from third countries will take financial advantage of this.

Piracy – why is this problem only mentioned in an African context? The problem is far greater in the waters around Indonesia. That also affects EU shipping companies.

Mandatory discharge – mandatory discharge should be made a statutory requirement in all coastal waters navigated, to avoid environmental disasters.

I also consider it regrettable that we have closed down so many small ports. We should invest in strengthening coastal maritime transport, not weakening it.

One final point – we are often told how important the shipbuilding industry is for the EU. Yet where is the debate on the responsible, environmentally sound scrapping of ships? Do we want to continue sending our ships for irresponsible scrapping on Indian beaches when we have finished with them?

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Europe's maritime matters cannot be viewed separately from international maritime matters. Europe is a major competitor on the maritime transport market, especially in terms of transporting passengers and containers. The European Union's position in the global market in this sector must be enhanced.

Improving the quality of training given to sailors, as well as their working and living conditions, both on board and when in port and roadsteads, can go a long way to meeting this requirement. There is a shortage of highly qualified workers right across the European maritime sector, from shipbuilders right down to pleasure boats.

Companies in the US, Asia and the Middle East offer far more facilities than their European counterparts. In these conditions, European professionals in this sector prefer to be employed by maritime companies or shipowners in Dubai or China, while European ships are crewed by Filipino and Indian seafarers. This situation must be ended. Maritime institutions in Member States must work together much more closely in order to harmonise their training programmes, as well as offer opportunities for paid work placements and exchanges of experience with European maritime companies.

I also wish to raise another point relating to security, which is extremely important and continues to hamper the smooth flow of global maritime traffic. I am referring to the situation in the Horn of Africa. I welcome the actions of the NAVFOR Atalanta operation, which is completely fulfilling its duty in the region. However, we must recognise that specific investment is required in the defence industry in order to be able to supply the military with ships and other intervention resources which are much more effective than those which the European navy currently deploys.

Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D). – (NL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner, I agree to a large extent with the comments made by my colleague Fleckenstein and would, first of all, like to thank the rapporteur, Mr van Dalen, for his excellent report. He hones in on a number of important issues, the importance of shipping for our economy, to begin with. He also points to the fact that we have to compete in a global market, and that we therefore have to pay attention to the competitiveness of our maritime sector while, at the same time, strive for more sustainable transport. In other words, we must counteract the risk of deflagging. At the same time, we must also play on a level playing field. It is therefore important that the State aid rules which have been in the pipeline for quite some time actually begin to apply to our ports. I am sure we will have to come back to this at a later stage.

There are three important areas for consideration. First of all, employment and working conditions. The shipping profession has to be made attractive to young people again, and these days, that is an extremely difficult thing to achieve. We have to make more effort to spread information about career opportunities, whether on shore or elsewhere. These are the things we need to build on. Working conditions also need to be improved by ratifying International Labour Organisation legislation and by performing checks at a global level, not just within Europe, obviously.

The second important point – and many of you have already mentioned it – is the impact of shipping on the environment. In itself, shipping is a sustainable mode of transportation, but there is still a lot of room for progress. On that score, Europe must play a pioneering role, including in the negotiations within the International Maritime Organisation.

Finally, it goes without saying that safety is essential. You can only create a thriving profession if it can be undertaken safely. We have to make the extended Third Maritime Safety Package a reality and continue to give support to the Atalanta mission off the coast of Somalia.

Gesine Meissner (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, since I am the first speaker from the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks to Mr van Dalen. We have all seen that he is wholeheartedly committed to maritime transport. That has become abundantly clear.

We all know how important this area is. In recent years, before the crisis, the maritime economy as a whole was growing considerably more than other areas of the economy. Of course, maritime transport plays a major role in this, and it is possible to say that maritime clusters will be absolutely crucial to the further development of Europe. There are also forecasts that predict that, now we are through the worst of the crisis, the transport sector will start to grow once again and that maritime transport will then gain in importance. Ninety per cent of our exports and imports are transported via the ports. Of course, in this regard it is important – as has already been said – for ports and hinterland connections to be given due consideration in connection with corridors and trans-European networks.

We need new blood. If we have more transport in the maritime sector, we will, of course, also need people who want to work in this area. For this, we need high quality training that is also harmonised throughout Europe and, at the same time, we need to advertise for this area. Young people simply need to see what future prospects they would have in maritime transport. We want good working conditions – that is also something that we can, and want to, harmonise throughout Europe.

The environmental aspect has already been mentioned. Shipping is very environmentally friendly, particularly where CO₂ emissions are concerned. There is still considerable room for improvement with regard to nitrogen oxides and sulphur emissions. Work needs to be done here, both in the sector itself and also in Europe in general, because, as has already been said, this is extremely important on account of there being strong international competition in maritime transport. In Europe, we play a fairly leading role in this, but we need to ensure that we also retain this leading role. In individual cases, we may also need State aid for this. We need to ensure that we work together to develop this sector further.

To sum up, maritime transport is a definite area for the future and therefore, it is good that we are developing a long-term strategy.

Dominique Riquet (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, it is vital that we conduct a European maritime transport policy that is ambitious and looks at the long term. It must take on board factors that are specific to this sector and address the challenges it is facing.

Maritime transport is a strategic sector for the European Union in several respects, primarily because of the role it plays in growth and employment, its international dimension and its environmental and sustainable development aspects. It has been mentioned that maritime transport is the vehicle for 80% of the world's trade. The European Commission Communication and Mr van Dalen's report show us the path we need to follow, set strategic goals and identify key action areas for the European Union's maritime transport policy.

I would personally like to stress certain points that my colleague, Mrs Vlasto, and I have been promoting within the Committee on Transport and Tourism, which are that the European Union needs to act to strengthen the competitiveness of the maritime transport sector, that this involves, in particular, improving working conditions and career opportunities within the sector, without dissociating the aim of competitiveness from those of sustainable development, fair competition and safety. As regards environmental aspects, EU policy should promote internalisation of external costs and the establishment of maritime emission control areas. Finally, in anticipation of increasing sea traffic levels, we need to promote investment aimed at modernising and increasing the capacity of our port infrastructures.

It is important for the European Parliament to share its vision for EU maritime transport policy from now until 2018. Mr van Dalen's excellent report, which has been very widely supported within the Commission, will, I hope, receive equally broad support from Parliament, which will give us a strong basis for future negotiations.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Maritime transport is becoming extremely important for the European Union. Bearing in mind that the maritime sector is facing competition not only at Community level, but especially on a global scale, we should emphasise the importance of increasing the proportion of maritime transport as part of our transport activity as a whole, both within the Community and particularly outside it. However, we should highlight that there are still European Union Member States on the black or grey list of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding. This is why we are calling on Member States and shipowners to make efforts to obtain a place on the white list of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding.

In addition, given the maritime accidents in recent years, I believe that European maritime accident intervention centres need to be set up in every Member State with access to the sea.

Commissioner, I wish to take advantage of this opportunity and debate to reiterate my request to the Commission to capitalise to the maximum extent on the European Union's direct access to the Black Sea, a region of particular geostrategic importance. In this regard, the Commission should launch, as in the case of the other European seas, calls for proposals for developing Black Sea maritime corridors. The link between the ports of Rotterdam and Constanța through the Rhine corridor, the Main Canal and River Danube cuts the distance between the North Sea and Black Sea by 4 000 kilometres. This is why I believe that this is vital and I am asking the Commission and Member States to speed up the implementation of priority project 18.

Although transport by ship causes less pollution, the European Parliament has asked for ship transport to be included in the emission certificate trading scheme, especially in the case of maritime transport.

Shipyards are facing financial difficulties, especially in the current economic and financial crisis. At the moment, shipyard representatives cannot envisage a solution for overcoming the current economic crisis.

The European maritime sector is facing an ever-growing shortage of qualified seafarers. The social aspect and work conditions enjoyed by seafarers in the European Union are closely linked to the European fleet's competitiveness. I think that measures are required to facilitate workers' mobility in this sector without unjustified barriers and restrictions.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, I would especially like to congratulate Mr van Dalen and also my colleague, Mr Fleckenstein, on this brilliant initiative, which moves forward with the European Parliament's ambition for European Union maritime policy, and I also want to thank them for their generosity in accepting a large proportion of my suggestions.

The completed report includes such important aspects as support for adapting ports and ships to the needs of people with reduced mobility and the requirement for ratification of the ILO 2006 Maritime Labour Convention and, moreover, it asks for the industry to incorporate the Convention into its practices. Another important aspect is the extension of the proposals for professional training to seafarers at all levels in order to combat their under-valuation and exploitation.

It also proposes leading the way in the fight against pollution in the International Maritime Organisation, in terms of both alternatives to bunker fuel and reducing sulphur in emissions, and proposes doing so by using smart transport systems such as the Galileo satellite system.

The report also proposes acknowledging the stepping up of the European fight against piracy and supporting the growing effectiveness of Operation Atalanta, as well as the need to improve the quality of ship design in order to adapt them to the highest accessibility and safety standards.

Finally, I especially welcome the acknowledgement of the role of the ports in the new trans-European networks, including their crucial connection with dry ports or inland ports and with logistics platforms.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, the strategy we are debating today is extremely ambitious and, as far as the basic direction is concerned, Mr Koumoutsakos, the rapporteur for our political group, has already covered everything I wanted to say.

Allow me, however, to make a comment, as a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, in connection with the very interesting and pioneering initiative to create e-maritime, a maritime monitoring network. I personally agree with the Commission text; it makes provision for the creation of an integrated information management system to recognise, monitor, locate and report all ships at sea and their cargos.

However, similar – I do not know if they are more or less developed – electronic monitoring actions are also being undertaken by Frontex forces, as part of the fight against illegal immigration. I therefore wish to ask if we are taking this into account, if the Commission needs to clarify anything in its communication, if there should be specific, different competences for each agency, or if perhaps this information should be combined, so that we have a better outcome in both directions.

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – Mr President, I would like to address two issues mentioned by the rapporteur, but not elaborated upon.

The first is piracy, on which the recommendations are all good, but inevitably general. Perhaps our experience on the basis of the lessons learned from the *Atalanta* operation can be used to contribute more to the self-protection rules recommended by the IMO, given that piracy will probably expand and our Union cannot reproduce that type of operation all over the maritime space used by the EU's merchant navies.

The second issue is the need for a better-developed link between the maritime and inland waterways sectors, given the complexity of activity in those areas. This is illustrated, for instance, in the interconnection between economic, social, environmental and political factors in the case of the River Danube and the Black Sea.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The first question concerns a report we are asking the European Commission for about the effectiveness of the Marco Polo programme. The second question relates to the possibility, or rather, the future legislative proposals on increasing the role of the European Union's maritime ports within global maritime logistics.

Georgios Koumoutsakos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, I have asked for the floor in order to clarify that, in my initial report, I overlooked something which my fellow members here have not mentioned either. I should like, in particular, to refer to the role of the European Maritime Safety Agency or EMSA. I and a number of other colleagues recently had an opportunity to visit EMSA, which carries out important work crucial to the development of the European Union's maritime transport strategy. It needs our support and I believe that the information and technical facilities which it has not only help shipping and maritime transport in the Union, but can also help in the other sectors referred to a moment ago, especially as regards, for example, information which can also be evaluated and used by Frontex.

To be honest, and this is my final comment, EMSA carries out important work which we must recognise and take into account when we discuss the European Union's maritime strategy.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, this has been a fascinating debate and definitely strengthens the excellent report by Mr van Dalen. I think it is well done because there is nothing more difficult than to write a report on strategy in general, because strategy is an instrument which really has a longer-term vision and, at the same time, it needs to concentrate on main points.

We are working now in the college to prepare a detailed roadmap for implementation. By the summer, we could come out with this. I should like to refer to three specific questions. One concerns State aid guidelines for ports. This is under discussion in the Commission's DG on Competition and with a former Commissioner for competition and they really would like us, as a Commission, to work in line together, so it will take some time. I cannot give any precise timelines but we are working on it.

On the Marco Polo issue, we have discussed the issues relating to the trans-European transport network, so this discussion will be related to this.

On maritime ports, we do not have any legislation at this stage in the pipeline.

Finally, thank you once again, Mr President and honourable Members, for this debate. It was really very helpful for the Commission.

Peter van Dalen, rapporteur. – (NL) Mr President, thank you and thank you to all the members. I think this report is a good example of constructive cooperation between the different groups.

I would like to address three key points which some of you have already mentioned. First of all, the environment, which is crucial. The environmental performance of our ships must improve a great deal and, in my report, I set out a number of options in that regard, in particular, levying a charge on bunker fuel which has a poor environmental profile. I wonder whether the Commission might like to consider that idea again.

Finally, the concept of 'green ports', as some members have dubbed it. In a green port, an environmentally friendly ship would be dealt with more quickly and would also have to pay a lower port duty. Such a concept is a reward for good environmental behaviour. That way, you actually combine a system of incentives and disincentives. If you have a good environmental record, you are rewarded and if you do not make the grade, then you very quickly end up with an empty wallet. I strongly endorse such a system.

When it comes to safety, one of the members said that Member States need to implement the Third Maritime Package very quickly. That is necessary. Mrs Țicău mentioned the Paris Memorandum of Understanding. You are quite right; inspection is now moving towards being inspection based on risks, which is much better

than the fixed percentage. This gives inspection an enormous boost and good behaviour is rewarded. That is, ships have to behave well. Slovakia is still not on the white list and must make an extra effort there.

I have placed particular emphasis on shipbuilding and maintenance of ships. We know that in times of economic downturn, maintenance quickly falls by the wayside. We clearly cannot allow that to happen, and classification societies, in particular, are currently facing major demands.

We give our full backing to the Atalanta mission against piracy. It is a good mission and has already proved a success. Only last week, a frigate of the Dutch Navy helped free a German merchant ship. Such cooperation seems ideal to me. In this particular case, all the shipowners had to work together and sail in a convoy as none of them was able to go it alone.

Finally, I would like to thank the Commissioner and the Commission and we look forward to this report being translated into a roadmap.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place in two weeks' time, during the part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Sergio Berlato (PPE), *in writing.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the European maritime transport sector plays a key role within the globalised market. Its importance is based on one key statistic: 41% of the global fleet is managed by the countries of the European Union.

However, following the increase in State aid in the maritime transport sectors of third countries, the competitive position of the European fleet is subject to growing pressure. Therefore, I call on the Commission to quickly present the new rules on State aid, in order to develop fair international maritime trade conditions.

Recent studies estimate that, in 2018, maritime transport will increase in the Member States from 3.08 billion tonnes in 2006 to 5.3 billion. I therefore agree with the content of the report in question; in other words, I agree that developing European port infrastructure capacities, in order to sustain the growth of the maritime transport sector, is a priority.

Lastly, I believe that the maritime professions should be promoted more among young European citizens with the aid of appropriate information, which currently seems to be lacking. As I see it, in fact, the growing lack of professionals in the European maritime transport sector may serve to weaken it over time.

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) Ladies and gentlemen, a look at the situation of European Union maritime transport can lead to ambivalent conclusions. On the one hand, the data which have been presented testify to the fact that the flags of Member States have a huge share of transport globally as well as inside the Union. This underlines the significance of the Community in the implementation of new technologies and organisational systems, especially those concerning environmental protection and improvements to the living standards of crews. On the other hand, however, increasingly strong competition from third countries can be observed, and particularly from what are known as flags of convenience. Also noticeable is the increasing reluctance of young people to take up work in what is, undoubtedly, a difficult sector. In summary, the present situation of the maritime transport market in the EU is not a bad one, but the prospects do not make us feel optimistic. However, for me, personally, measures to help inland shipping and ensure optimal connections between maritime and inland transport of goods are a priority. I represent the region of the upper Odra river basin, and can see what little use is being made of the potential of river ports in this region, especially as a transportation route connecting inland regions of the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany with the sea port in Szczecin. This aspect, too, should be borne in mind in the context of EU maritime transport, so that measures taken as part of the policy under discussion will contribute to the development of the Community as a whole, and not only of coastal areas.

Vilja Savisaar (ALDE), *in writing.* – (ET) Mr President, Mr van Dalen, ladies and gentlemen, 41% of fleets worldwide belong to Europe, yet unfortunately, some other countries give more support to their fleets and shipowners than do the European Union Member States, or impose less stringent requirements on the safety and environmental friendliness of ships.

Europe must guarantee better working conditions for its sailors, the safety of its ships and an improvement in the marine environmental situation. In order to do this, we should require, or perhaps encourage Member States to support the state's maritime sector or guarantee that ships appearing on the register of that state

observe the convention that has been ratified, as well as international requirements. Although sea transport is more environmentally friendly than road or air transport, it is possible to reduce pollution still further here.

My hope in presenting this proposal for change is that it will make future docking operations more effective and less polluting, something which will definitely be facilitated by paper-free procedures as well as the wider use of intelligent transport systems. At the same time, the main goal of intelligent transport systems is not to reduce pollution, but to increase efficiency and guarantee better competition.

The safety of the maritime sector is very important. We must do everything to guarantee the safety of our sailors, passengers, ships and goods but, at the same time, we cannot solve this problem with our eyes closed. We must look at the situation more broadly and find a solution to the existing problems in this area.

In a nutshell, I would say that maritime activity is a very important part of the economy and the everyday life of many Europeans. We must therefore do everything to guarantee the competitiveness and sustainability of this sector, while not forgetting environmental and human factors.

21. Europeana - the next steps (short presentation)

President. - The next item is the short presentation of the report by Helga Trüpel, on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education, on Europeana – the next steps (COM(2009)0440 – 2009/2158(INI)) (A7-0028/2010).

Helga Trüpel, rapporteur. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner Kroes, Europeana is to be the major digital cultural project of the European Union. What does Europeana mean? It is a digital library, a digital museum and a digital archive for our European cultural heritage. The intention is to provide access for all citizens to this digital resource, not only within the European Union, but throughout the world. The Europeana project was started in November 2008 and 1 000 cultural institutions contributed to its establishment. It has 150 partner organisations. So far, around 6 million works from our European cultural heritage have been digitised. By June 2010, there are expected to be 10 million digitised works and by 2015, the figure is expected to reach 15 million.

As you can see, this is a very ambitious undertaking, and it is very important for the European Union. Up to now, it has been funded by the eContentplus programme and by the Member States. However, so far, the rate of digitisation has varied considerably between the Member States. France is leading the way with over 40%, Germany is at around 16%, but many other Member States are much further behind, and this, remember, is supposed to be our joint flagship of European digital cultural policy.

It is particularly important that we understand that there is a public cultural institution, and this is intended, for understandable reasons, to provide strong competition for the Google Book Search legal case settlement, because we do not want our European heritage simply to be entrusted to a monopoly. We want a public resource, in the best European sense, for our European cultural heritage. We also want to retain public influence, because that means that European citizens can also have genuine political influence.

There is no problem in respect of works that are no longer subject to copyright or that are in the public domain. It is much more complicated when it comes to orphan works, in other words, works that have not been released from copyright, but for which it is very difficult to trace the rightful holders. It is another matter again when it comes to works protected by copyright. If Europeana is to one day also hold works protected by copyright, there will need to be a payment for private downloads, because otherwise, we will destroy our cultural added value on the cultural markets.

Therefore, what I want to achieve from a political point of view is, on the one hand, quick and effective digitisation while, at the same time, retaining copyright, because that is the only way that we will be able to maintain the cultural diversity of the European Union. Thus, we need consensual solutions for orphan works and a very thorough search to find out who the rightful copyright holders are. From a political perspective, the absolutely key issue for me when we now discuss the post-Lisbon strategy, the EU 2020 strategy, and when it comes to modernising our economy, developing the digital society, the knowledge-based society and cultural diversity, is that Europeana must also be partly financed from this EU 2020 programme, with the involvement of the Member States, of course. It must be a joint European project. We therefore also need a 'join Europeana' campaign to hopefully find additional private sponsors. We must make it clear, however,

that we need to raise awareness among our citizens and, above all, among young people, that this resource exists. Many people still do not know about this. That is the huge task that we now have to face together.

Piotr Borys (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Europeana is an undertaking of crucial importance, which can make the cultural heritage of Europe available to the whole world. As we all know, it is not only a library, for it is also a virtual museum and archive. I wish that each one of us in this Chamber could say that the works of great national creators, such as in my case Chopin, Marie Curie *née* Skłodowska or Słowacki, could be available on the Internet. I would like to mention three key factors. Firstly, in the case of Europeana, we cannot allow a reduction in quality. This is something about which we should be careful during this project. Secondly, it requires a solution to the matter of copyright in the case of orphan and out-of-print works. Thirdly, I have a huge request to Mrs Kroes to speed up digitisation in Member States, if we want to be proud of this great flagship project in the future.

I would like to thank Mrs Trüpel for an excellent report.

Ioan Enciu (S&D). – (RO) As rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the report 'Europeana - the next steps', I welcome the fact that this report has been finalised and I hope that its recommendations will be adopted by the Commission. During the debates on this topic so far, a whole range of subjects have been discussed, such as IT structure, management of the Europeana site, free access to library information, the need to standardise the digitisation process and the problem of media coverage for the website. Some of these subjects feature in the report. This fills me with the hope that we have managed to achieve an exhaustive report.

However, I hope that the debate will continue in the future on certain aspects, such as managing the site, funding methods and, above all, organising the site in the form of a single database and not a portal. I hope that the recommendations specified by the European Parliament, along with the Commission's reflections on the issues mentioned above, will be turned into a successful project. Europeana can become a successful project for the European Union as long as it is built on the EU's values and ideals and provides the focal point for European cultural information.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, to begin with, I would like to thank Mrs Trüpel for this excellent report. I have known her well from the committee for five years now, and I know that whatever she does, she does with true care and professionalism, and this is one good indication of that.

This is another kind of project that we need in Europe, because the European Union is regarded as a community of values, but it is also a strong cultural community. We have 27 different Member States which have an extremely rich and varied culture.

If, at a time when information highways are increasing in number, we can make information more easily available to people, then this is the kind of European richness which is worth investing in and seeking resources for. In this way, all the small countries will also have the opportunity to promote their own unique and special cultures. Once broadband is extended everywhere through the work of the Commission and the Member States, the principle of equality will be realised in the supply of cultural services, in electronic libraries, museums and archives.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR). – (PL) My political group, and I personally, are not specially in favour of extensive programmes and institutions or of creating entities which go beyond what is needed. However, Europeana is not such an entity. It is, in fact, something very important, especially because we live in times of a visual, and not a written, culture. This means, as Neil Postman has shown in his superb book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, that the visual culture is devaluing public debate and making us poorer citizens. This means, in turn, that if a project has a chance of improving the habit of reading, it has a chance of improving the mind of the citizen, and in this way, the European Union would contribute to a strengthening of the quality of the education of its citizens and the way they function, and this would mean that in the Member States, those citizens would be more active and wiser and would be better citizens.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are debating an initiative which may prove to be a real treasure for the Union and I should like at this point to thank the rapporteur, Mrs Trüpel, once again for the exceptional report which she has submitted.

We are referring to an electronic cultural depository of the European States which will allow access to primary cultural information, and I should like to emphasise at this point that the success of Europeana will depend

on the format which we ultimately decide to give it, by which I mean that we do not want a Europeana which is a copy of electronic platforms that already exist, such as Google or Wikipedia.

We want a serious and reliable source, the information in which is of scientific importance and value, a source in which intellectual property rights are protected and the seriousness of the content of which is safeguarded. I think this is guaranteed with the amendments tabled and the debate on the subject that we held in the Committee on Culture and Education. Of course, what it cannot ultimately safeguard is the interest on the part of the Member States in making use of this tool to promote their culture.

This is where we all need to develop our role, to explain how important this project is to our national governments and the citizens of the Member States, so that this project has an impact and we can all make use of it in the best possible way in the medium term.

Petra Kammerevert (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would once again like to offer my sincere thanks to Mrs Trüpel for the truly excellent report that we are debating today.

I believe that it is a splendid project that will be making Europe's diverse cultural heritage available to the people of Europe and throughout the world in a digital online library. However, it still requires further joint efforts on our part to actually make this project a success. A significant prerequisite for this is, in the view of my group, the free – and that means also, as far as possible, cost-free – access to our cultural heritage via Europeana.

In the joint discussions, we have reached a good compromise, which protects the interests of authors of protected works on the one hand while, at the same time, providing the necessary free accessibility, and I would very much like the Commission to also take account of and adopt these proposals in future.

Another prerequisite is that the Member States become increasingly aware of their responsibility. For my own country, this means that it is not acceptable for Goethe to be available in Polish and French, but not in the original German. In this regard, we must all jointly call on the Member States more strongly to once again provide the appropriate financial resources to make Europeana a real success on this level as well.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Bearing in mind the benefits offered to the European Union's citizens through having access to Europeana, I believe that existing digital content must be made available in all the European Union's official languages. I also think that it is of paramount importance to offer people with disabilities access to Europeana's digital content. With this in mind, not only is a suitable format required, but also access which is adapted to their needs.

We recommend that the European Commission ask digital content providers to certify the security of the websites linked to Europeana. Last but not least, I believe that it is important to provide a sustainable system with regard to funding and developing the Europeana project. Commissioner, please also say a few words to us about the revision of the directive on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society.

Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, and, of course, especially Mrs Trüpel, we are absolutely fascinated by your report. We welcome it. I think that indeed 'Europeana – the next steps' is just a start of a very challenging adventure and it shows, by the way, the strong political support for the further development of Europeana as a common access point to Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage in the digital age.

So I would like to thank Mrs Trüpel, the rapporteur, for the work she has done and also give her my compliments for the branding, since the branding itself is already unique: 'Europeana' – you do not need to explain what it is all about.

The Commission can also support the alternative motion for a resolution, which has the agreement of the main political groups in Parliament, I have been informed.

It is an ambitious project and again, I repeat, it is the start. It aims to make digitised books, newspapers, maps, museum objects, audiovisual material and sound archives from across Europe available on the Internet. That is essential to ensure access to culture in the digital age. It is not only what Mr Migalski said: something that makes us better citizens. Well, let us wait and find out, but, anyhow, it gives an opportunity to be more happy, for enjoying culture is, in most cases, enjoying happiness, so to speak.

It is Parliament's report that rightly underlines that there is also an economic component. The digitisation and the online accessibility of our cultural heritage will benefit different sectors of activity: think of education, research, tourism and the media.

The Europeana site is the result of an unprecedented collaboration between European libraries, archives and museums. At present, as was rightly mentioned by Mrs Trüpel, it gives direct access to 7 million digitised objects. Again, this is just a start and let us go for it. More can be done and more needs to be done. The Parliament report highlights different areas for Europeana and for the related policies where progress must be made in the coming years.

The development of the site depends, in the first place, on the input from Member States who should do more to digitise their cultural heritage and to make all digitised objects available through Europeana. I am glad that Parliament joins the Commission in asking Member States to make fast progress in doing so. The sooner the better.

Parliament underlines that Europeana should not just give access to public domain works, but should also include material that is still in copyright. Indeed, there is an urgent need – and that is my answer to Mrs Țicău – to find workable solutions for bringing out-of-print works online, for dealing with the issue of orphan works (works for which it is impossible to locate the rights holders). Failing to do so bears the risk that Europe will lag behind within a few years from now, in particular, compared to the US.

At present, the Commission is carrying out an impact assessment on a possible legal solution for orphan works at European level and we are discussing what could be done, but if you do not mind, I will come back to that when we talk of the digital agenda, for that is one of the issues that we have to touch upon.

An enhanced version of Europeana will be launched later this year, and is expected to give, by then, access to more than 10 million digitised objects. The site will be further developed in the years thereafter. Parliament rightly points out that for the success of Europeana, it is a must to increase the awareness of the site both among cultural institutions, who could contribute their digitised content, and among the general public. Special attention should be given to younger people, rightly mentioned by you, an extremely important part of our population, who could be targeted through the schools.

The Commission is fully committed to continuing work on the development of Europeana and the policies related to it and that will be a key area of work in the European Digital Agenda. It is anyhow worthwhile to fight for it.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place in two weeks' time, at the next part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) Europeana, the European Digital Library, faces many challenges today. The success of this pan-European undertaking is far from being assured. Firstly, because until now, Europeana has contained, principally, works coming from just a few of the most active countries. Secondly, these are not contemporary works, which would attract the greatest interest, but older ones which are in the public domain. I would like to draw particular attention to one aspect of the Europeana project which, in my opinion, is of crucial significance for its success – financing. The process of extending digital collections is very expensive and will take many more years. Meanwhile, Europeana is only guaranteed financial resources up until 2013, as part of a project financed partly by the European Commission and Member States, and also by private sponsors. I think it is essential to ensure stable sources of finance as part of the new Financial Perspective for 2014-2020. European funds in the form of grants made to individual cultural institutions in Member States should encourage them to be more effective in the digitisation of collections. At the same time, compulsory digitisation targets should be introduced, which Member States would have to meet in a specified time. Only consistent realisation of a 'carrot and stick' approach will ensure that Europeana becomes an attractive portal of great interest to readers and researchers, and not a digital attic used for the sentimental storage of old junk.

Iosif Matula (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) Our intention is for Europeana to be a brand new project devoted to European cultural values and not an alternative to Google's book digitising project. Europeana, which is a library, museum and digital archive rolled into one, must promote a single European heritage, offer a credible source of information and enable Member States to add content in a formal, structured manner.

Europeana must not turn into a portal like Wikipedia where anyone can input text without it being verified beforehand. This practice obviously produces numerous mistakes in the content posted there. In this regard, we could create a special section on this site specifically where users can have discussions with each other, without offering them the chance to amend the cultural content posted on the site.

It is important for us to focus attention on the Europeana site's graphical presentation, on raising its profile and making it accessible at a time when its current design is not very user-friendly and may contribute to a loss of public interest. Based on the considerations mentioned, I support the motion for a resolution tabled by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) as an alternative to the current option put forward in the report so that we can help create a valuable portal, which is relevant in terms of the information the public will find there.

Emil Stoyanov (PPE), *in writing*. – (BG) Ladies and gentlemen, one of our fundamental duties nowadays as politicians and citizens is to preserve our European cultural heritage for future generations. Europeana is one of the leading projects in this area, helping to speed up the processes for digitising cultural heritage in each individual Member State. However, cultural and legal problems associated with the mass digitisation of books, including those currently held by European libraries, still remain to be overcome. Copyright and legislation governing it in Member States pose one of the biggest challenges Europeana faces. Competition with Google also spotlights numerous issues which will have to be resolved. In this respect, every possible resource needs to be found to support national libraries, museums and archives so that the Europeana project can become a true reflection of the wealth and diversity of Europe's cultural heritage. During the debates in the Committee on Culture and Education, I suggested that the European Parliament should have certain controls over the project, but I realise that, based on current rules, this is not possible. Nevertheless, I want the European Parliament, as the only EU institution whose members are directly elected, to be able one day to exercise its control over European initiatives. Thank you for your attention.

22. Evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 (short presentation)

President. - The next item is the report by Marit Paulsen, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on the evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 (A7-0053/2010).

Marit Paulsen, *rapporteur*. – (SV) Mr President, animal welfare is, in fact, something that most of the citizens of Europe care about. Animal welfare is not just about animals. It also concerns our own identity, what we think we represent and what we think Europe represents, what we consider to be the hallmarks of civilisation; it is about respect and how we treat these, our fellow travellers in the journey through life.

In my assessment, which is supported by the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the vast majority of the five year plan adopted by Parliament in 2006 – for which Mrs Jeggle was rapporteur – has been implemented fairly reasonably. One very important piece of the puzzle is missing, and that is compliance. Consequently, when I outlined the coming five year plan – which both I and the Committee very much hope will come about this year – I focused on tightening up compliance with the existing legislation.

At present, this means, in particular, the directive on the life, welfare and management of pigs. It also concerns the recurrent problem of the long-distance transport of animals, sometimes in grim conditions. In other words, it is about compliance with, control of and the sanctions contained in the laws, directives and regulations that have already been passed.

Furthermore, I should like to see a slightly new approach – and in particular a more holistic approach. I would like to see a general act on the protection of animals that sets a basic standard for Europe, the EU and the internal market, with minimum levels laid down.

This is important for two reasons. Firstly, because of competition within the Union in the internal market; in other words, it must not be possible for one country to derive a competitive advantage as a result of the neglect of animals. The second and perhaps most important reason is that we make great demands of European farmers and producers. They therefore need to be protected from unfair competition from third countries. It is unreasonable to make such great demands of them if we are not prepared to ensure fair trade. Moreover – and this may not be so popular – somehow or other, we have to pay for animal welfare. Whether this is at the point of sale or via taxes is a debate for another occasion. We also need to establish a permanent,

well-organised network – and note here what I am saying: not a new authority, but rather coordinating functions for the extremely good scientific institutions that we already have in Europe.

Last but not least, we need to get to grips with the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry. I am not talking now about the risk of antibiotic residues in foods, but rather about the resistance to antibiotics – particularly among zoonotic bacteria – which poses a considerable threat to public health.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, I want to refer to a piece of legislation with which the Commissioner – who was Energy Commissioner for five years – will be closely acquainted. That is the Laying Hens Directive, which requires the animal welfare standards of the cages in which egg-laying hens are kept to be upgraded by the end of next year.

I thought this would cost thousands. In fact, in many commercial centres, it costs millions, as large-scale industrial equipment is involved. Many countries have complied with the directive. Many farmers have invested money to ensure that animal welfare standards are raised to the required level, but I do not think we are likely to get compliance across the entire European Union by the end of next year.

I want to know what action the Commission will take, and what action it is initiating, to try and get compliance.

The rapporteur has called for a ban on trade in eggs which do not comply with the legislation. I am not sure that one can do that. However, I want to know that the Commission is being proactive in trying to ensure that Member States and their farmers keep to raising these animal welfare standards and that there is a level playing field for all.

Michel Dantin (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Mrs Paulsen, thank you for your report. I would like to applaud the work that has been done by the various shadow rapporteurs as part of the preparation for this dossier and, in particular, the rapporteur for my group, Mrs Jeggle.

This issue resonates differently in the various European countries. Not all producers or consumers perceive the issue in the same way. In spite of this, European legislation is gradually succeeding in creating a very strict standard, which I feel we should make much better use of in international negotiations and, in particular, in the control of imported products.

However, as has already been said, these rules carry a cost, and every day we are seeing this cost rise for farmers and other operators, at the very time when the profitability of farming is being hit hard. This is, therefore, a clear justification for the common agricultural policy. If we spend EUR 100 per head per year to finance a common agricultural policy, animal welfare is one good reason why this funding is needed.

Vasîlica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D). – (RO) I wish to congratulate Mrs Paulsen for this report, which offers solutions concerning animal welfare and the problems which this subject raises within European policies. It is well known that animal health comprises their well-being and a certain, minimum biological comfort, without which it is not possible for them to fully express their vitality, including their natural behaviour, depending on the changes which occur in their living environment.

This is why I believe that the improvement and increase in competitiveness in the agricultural sector must be maintained at European Union level by promoting and observing the current regulations governing animal welfare, which must also comply with the requirements for their protection. This entails Member States considering a review of their livestock rearing technologies and replacing old technologies with other, state-of-the-art and high-performance technologies, which take into account the animals' physiological needs and allow their productive biological potential to be utilised in ideal conditions, also resulting in much better food safety. This obviously envisages both the allocation of appropriate funds to this area and the efficient use of the support opportunities offered by them so that Member States can invest in modern, innovative solutions intended for the benefit of the animals' welfare.

I believe that, in order to find the best solutions, an important role can be given to the involvement of ordinary citizens and civil society in drafting and implementing programmes in this area, tailored to the actual situations in each Member State.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, animal welfare is also a measure of how civilised we, the European people, are. The European Union must ensure that legislation is up to date and that supervision is in operation. At the moment, there are shortcomings in both of these areas.

The question of transporting animals has been raised here. We have seen some cruel and harsh films on the television and, in this matter, as well as in every matter associated with animal welfare, we would expect swift action from the Commission so that we can be sure that animals are treated in a decent manner.

Andris Piebalgs, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to thank Parliament and, in particular, Mrs Paulsen, for the own-initiative report on the EU Animal Welfare Action Plan. The report is not only a reflection of what has passed, but also contains important and useful ideas for a future strategy on animal welfare.

The Action Plan, adopted in 2006, has basically been a success. It has brought together separate EU initiatives into a single vision on animal welfare, and its implementation has been broadly satisfactory. That said, the Commission shares the view expressed during this catch-the-eye session that enforcement remains a serious issue and efforts need to be maintained and enhanced to ensure proper implementation.

Regarding the question from Chris Davies, we will provide a written answer on that particular question but, basically, the Commission is focused on implementation. The rules adopted should be implemented. It is not only about the rule of law, but also about fair competition.

We also agree on the need to promote fair competition between EU and non-EU producers. Animal welfare is also a 'non-trade concern' that has to be defended and explained during the WTO negotiations. Our future strategy will have to make that clear.

I note the call for a new action plan for 2011-15, and am pleased to inform you that the Commission has already started work in that direction. Our ambition is to establish a new strategy for animal welfare that will adopt a holistic approach, taking into account the overall costs for EU producers and the effects of welfare measures on their competitiveness.

As mentioned in the report, Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union underlines the need for consideration for all animals. The idea of a general European animal welfare law, encompassing all animals, is also a very interesting one. Such a general law could be the basis for future initiatives, including legislation, but also information to the consumer, education, research and promotion of higher standards.

I also note and appreciate the support for the establishment of a European network of reference centres for animal welfare. This would assist EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders in their actions to promote animal welfare initiatives.

I share your opinion that the future strategy should carefully look at costs and competitiveness. We must ensure consistency between our policies, keeping in mind the overall sustainability of our proposals from a global perspective.

The report also stressed that the EU budget should correspond to our ambitions – in particular, by providing sufficient resources for research, new technologies and techniques in the field of animal welfare. It also stressed the need for sufficient resources for proper monitoring and support to EU producers.

As I have said, the Commission welcomes all these ideas – which collectively show that animal welfare is high on the EU's agenda. The Commission plans to present a new EU strategy for animal welfare in 2011.

President. - The debate is closed. The vote will take place in two weeks' time, during the part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Animal welfare is an important issue. European legislation on this matter must be rigorously applied, as Mrs Paulsen's report recommends. We must also ensure that the animal welfare standards imposed in the EU are applied reciprocally to goods entering European territory. Indeed, our farmers and the European agri-food industry must not be penalised at a time when they are incurring additional costs to meet EU requirements. Animal welfare standards must go hand in hand with European trade policy, with the protection of our jobs and with hunting practices for fauna management, which are crucial to the balance of biodiversity. Moreover, I would express my reservations about the creation of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals. As rapporteur for the 2008 discharge to be granted to the decentralised agencies of the EU, I am well aware of the problem of setting up agencies which, unfortunately, have no overall coherence. This issue, which the interinstitutional

working group on the agencies is looking into, must be resolved before the establishment of any new agencies is considered.

23. EU agriculture and climate change (short presentation)

President. - The next item is the report by Stéphane Le Foll, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on EU agriculture and climate change (SEC(2009)0417 – 2009/2157(INI)) (A7-0060/2010).

Stéphane Le Foll, rapporteur. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, the report I am presenting to Parliament sets out to explain that the agricultural sector has a place and a role to play in the fight against global warming.

This week, nature has reminded us – this time in the shape of volcanoes – that it can have a major impact on human activities and on the climate. However, this means that, in spite of everything, human beings and Europe in particular must take responsibility for combating what we refer to as global warming.

My report aims to show that the agricultural sector can continue to reduce both its carbon emissions and its fossil fuel consumption and, above all, at the same time, can make a very active contribution to carbon fixation so that, at world level, we can achieve lower carbon emissions and ensure that a greater proportion of carbon is stored and captured.

The report attempts to illustrate the need for agriculture to move away from a compartmentalised approach, which consists of introducing a new directive on soil, water, pesticides and so on, whenever there is a problem, towards trying to tackle the agricultural issue in a more comprehensive and systematic way.

Within this type of approach, we will need to identify avenues which ensure, as I mentioned earlier, that the agricultural sector not only reduces its energy consumption but, at the same time, actively participates in carbon fixation. This role relates, in particular, to photosynthesis and biomass, and especially to an area that is close to my heart, which is soil and the capacity of European soils to store organic carbon.

I believe that this approach, which I discuss in this report and which I hope will be endorsed during the vote that is due to take place in the Brussels part-session, will enable agriculture in Europe to enter a new phase of sustainability and to make the transition to a more environmentally aware state which would place it ahead of a number of other continents and other agricultural systems. In doing so, it would have a more positive impact both economically and environmentally and, as a result, a more positive impact in social terms.

This report deals, therefore, with the specific issue of agriculture in relation to the fight against global warming, but it also claims – in any case I hope it does – to explore other ways of sustaining, in particular, the debate that will be taking place on the future of agricultural policy post-2013.

I am addressing the Commission; I will be addressing the agricultural committees, as I have frequently done, and I will also be addressing the various ministers when I have the opportunity. I believe we need to change direction. The 2013 CAP needs to be ambitious. It must be based on goals that will help citizens to understand why we need a common agricultural policy.

We need a common agricultural policy because Europe's agricultural community needs both to ensure food security and to embark on the path of sustainability. In any case, this is the direction I propose in my report and the one in which I hope a large majority of Parliament will follow me.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, many thanks to the rapporteur for his report. Agriculture is the economic sector that is already doing, and can still do, the most to protect the environment. Thus, we have already succeeded in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases in agriculture by 20%. In addition, agricultural soils and plants draw large quantities of CO₂ from the atmosphere. Agriculture is therefore part of the solution to the problem of climate change. On the other hand, food production for 500 million EU citizens must take priority while, at the same time, using resources as efficiently as possible and providing the highest possible level of protection for the environment and biodiversity.

Farmers cannot manage this alone. They need a strong European agriculture policy to support them. Only in this way can we succeed in producing sufficient food for a growing world population and, at the same time, protect the environment in order to combat climate change.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, Mr Le Foll's report is extremely important, because European food production and agriculture are important issues.

Europe must be self-sufficient. This is also important for preventing climate change, because short transportation distances and local food are the best way of preventing climate change.

Agriculture must be ecologically sustainable and, in this regard, we have much work to do. The European Union Member States can play a pioneering role on this issue, and in this sense, Europe and the Member States are in a good position in that we have the opportunity to invest in research.

Martin Häusling (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Le Foll most sincerely for his report. It contains very important points that we will need to take heed of in future. Climate protection must also be part of the new agricultural reform; it needs to be incorporated into this reform. In future, we will need sustainable and ecologically sound procedures which ensure that the environment is protected. Agriculture is not only a victim in relation to climate protection; it is also a significant part of the cause. Ten per cent of greenhouse gases still originate from agriculture. There needs to be a reduction here, too.

We also need to take note of a subject that is mentioned in the Le Foll report, namely, the fact that we import a great deal of soya from Brazil, for example. European agriculture is also partly responsible for the fact that areas of primary forest in other countries are being turned into very intensively farmed agricultural land, which then ultimately has an impact back here, too. That is something that we need to consider in future. In future, we will also need to endeavour to re-establish our own protein supply in Europe. That is also part of the solution to the environmental problems relating to climate protection.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) An extremely important aspect of the Le Foll report is that without agriculture, we would not even have a chance to take action against global climate change. At the same time, I am thinking here of forestry, in particular, which, to this day, does not get adequate support. I completely agree that in future, agriculture must be greener and more environmentally friendly. On the one hand, this is very important; on the other hand, agriculture produces numerous environmental public goods – biodiversity, protection of the countryside, water purity and so on – which the market does not sufficiently reward, and neither does the common agricultural policy. Therefore, our common agricultural policy must, from 2013 onwards, create a market for environmental public goods so that farmers may receive additional services and compensation for these additional services which they perform.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, this own-initiative report concerns an extremely important area, because the role played by agriculture will only increase in the future. Demand for food is increasing rapidly worldwide at the same time as climate change is reducing the area of land available for farming across the globe. In addition, the demands of consumers regarding the quality of food are increasing.

As well as reliably providing for its own food security, Europe must also play a role in maintaining the food supply in other continents.

Investment in sustainable forestry and the better exploitation of forests must also be seen as an important part of EU climate policy. Because of this, I was also a little disappointed that in the EU's 2020 strategy, a minuscule amount was invested in agriculture and forestry. After all, agriculture and forestry play a very vital role in ensuring the safety of European food, more effective bioenergy production and the viability of rural areas.

Marit Paulsen (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, if I may, I would like to thank the rapporteur for a very refreshing new approach. Personally, I am convinced that farming and forestry are easily the most important factors in our efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, particularly if we are to bind carbon in trees, plants and roots and fix it in the soil. This does not involve mastering new technology or carrying out research projects, because we already have the knowledge and instruments required.

Since I have just been speaking on the protection of animals and animal welfare, I would like to ask a radical question: is it not the common agricultural policy itself that we need to change? If we paid farmers for all the benefits that they produce which are vital to life – as in this case – for all of society, then, rather than paying for what people own, we would be paying them for what they do.

Vasile Viorica Dăncilă (S&D). – (RO) First of all, I want to congratulate the rapporteur for the comprehensive approach he has adopted in dealing with one of the most urgent problems of the moment. Climate change poses one of the most serious threats not only to the environment, but to the economy and society as well. Crop yields fluctuate from one year to the next, heavily influenced by the variation in extreme

climate conditions, which has an implicit impact on every sector of the economy, although agriculture remains the most vulnerable.

Against this background, the European Commission's strategies must consider both the prevention and mitigation of the adverse consequences for agriculture in the European Union by implementing an action plan in the most affected areas. I am referring at this point to adapting agricultural activities to the new conditions: forestation, the management of water resources for agriculture and making polluted land environmentally friendly.

The other measure must be a plan for the future aimed at eliminating the causes of climate change by promoting a global low carbon economy, combined with the promotion of energy security. The European Union must maintain its leading position in the battle against climate change, which must not slip to number two as a result of the current economic difficulties.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I am impressed by this report's comprehensive approach. I do have, however, a simple question: what is the real responsibility, influence and impact of agriculture on climate change? I am thinking of beneficial effects as well as adverse ones. Can it be said that the position of science and the results of our research are sufficiently strong arguments to expect such a large increase in expenditure on combating warming which has not been fully defined? After all, there is such an urgent need to combat the effects of the economic crisis, unemployment and other difficult problems arising from the socio-economic situation in the Union.

To what extent is the common agricultural policy already implementing the requirements of climate protection, and what instruments can be applied in the CAP in this area in the future?

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, I just want to mention my home. I am lucky enough to live on the edge of the Saddleworth Moorlands, between the cities of Manchester and Leeds. It is the southern end of an area of peatland that stretches straight up from England into Scotland.

It is a very rare habitat across Europe, but it is also a habitat that has been much denuded by 250 years of industrial pollution which have devastated the variety of species that it can support. That has been complemented by overgrazing, perhaps by sheep, and by fires. Of course, as the peatland dries out, it releases global warming gases. A huge potential supply of global warming gas is being released from what should be a wonderful area.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is now trying to restore that habitat and to get the sphagnum moss that created the peatland to grow once again. The funding they require is not in the millions – it is in the tens of thousands or perhaps the hundreds of thousands. It is a small element that can contribute both to the restoration and encouragement of biodiversity and also the protection of this moorland habitat which ensures that these global warming gases are contained within it. As we look at the reform of the common agricultural policy, this is something we must very much bear in mind.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Agriculture generates a significant proportion of the total volume of carbon dioxide emissions. This is why we are highlighting the need to improve energy efficiency in this sector. I urge the Commission to constantly examine the link between high food prices and rising energy prices, especially for the fuels being used.

I would like to remind you that the incentives to encourage sustainable cultivation of energy crops should not jeopardise food production. For this reason, we are calling on the Commission to monitor the effects of increased biofuel production in the European Union and in third countries in terms of changes in land use, food product prices and access to food.

We call on the Commission and Member States to promote research and development in order to prevent and enable us to adapt to climate change. I am referring here, in particular, to research into the future generation of biofuels.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Le Foll, for this very important report on agriculture and climate change.

The fight against climate change is an absolute priority globally. The EU is also making a huge contribution and also the agricultural sector already contributes in the fight against climate change. We have a policy that limits greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture also provides renewable energy sources in better using the

whole cycle and all the products that come from agriculture. Also, EU agriculture policy is working to optimise a carbon sink function of agricultural soils.

Since the 1992 reform, significant progress has been made in integration of all environmental considerations into the common agriculture policy. The recent 'health check' reform represented a further step in this direction with specific emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The current common agriculture policy framework provides a balanced approach between binding requirements enforced through cross-compliance, which sets the limits on some farming practices, and positive incentives for climate-friendly farming practices provided by rural development.

The Commission fully shares the view that climate change now needs to be addressed globally and it is important that others follow our example also. We need, on the one hand, to further help EU agriculture to contribute to mitigating climate change by reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing CO₂ sequestration in soils and making use of renewable energies from other sources and, on the other, to be more productive, to be more efficient at providing food supplies, in this way demonstrating that one can achieve both goals: food security on the one side, environmental sustainability on the other side.

In the preparation now of the common agricultural policy for post 2013, and in the light of the results of the ongoing negotiations on climate change, the Commission will examine ways to further and better integrate adaptation and mitigation objectives in the common agriculture policy instruments.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place in two weeks' time, at the next part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) Agriculture is, and will continue to be, directly affected by climate change, because it involves living organisms and its outcomes are influenced, above all, by the quality of the soil, water and air. Unfortunately, agriculture also currently has a share (of almost 10%) in the creation of greenhouse gases. Nitrous oxide is released from nitrogenous fertilisers and methane is created through the digestive processes of livestock. It is precisely agriculture, of course, which can help in the fight against global warming, especially through new methods of tillage aimed at conserving soil and reducing storage of CO₂, through support for forestry and agro forestry and through support for organic farming. I welcome and I fully endorse the opinion of the rapporteur concerning the introduction of a genuine European forestry policy, in which it would be possible to support the administration and subsequent output of forests, and not to exploit forests mainly for economic activities focused chiefly on generating financial profits, whether for semi-nationalised or private entities. Scientific research shows that this sector is uniquely capable of capturing carbon in a natural and non-polluting form. Forests also help to solve problems of soil erosion and degradation, water shortages and pollution, and to preserve the biological diversity of plant and animal species. For all of the above reasons, I fully support the adoption of the report.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE), in writing. – I welcome this timely report which addresses the role agriculture can play in mitigating the impact of climate change. The FAO report 'The State of Food and Agriculture 2009' underlines the necessity of livestock in food production worldwide. In order to meet the global demand for food, it is essential to maintain our current production levels. We will, however, need to find a balance between providing sufficient food for the world's population, while producing this food in a way that does not lead to increased negative impacts on the world's climate. The part that European farmers can play in this will come into clearer focus in the ongoing debate on the future shape of the CAP post-2013 and it is essential that the EU assists our farmers in striking this balance.

I fully support this EP report's call to compensate farmers for their efforts in reducing emissions and to provide support in adapting to climate mitigation measures. The report's proposal for the development of a strategy at EU level to address the impact of adverse weather conditions on EU agriculture is very welcome and indeed very pertinent, considering the exceptionally harsh climatic conditions experienced by farmers over the past months.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Climate change has a direct influence on agriculture. Its most severe effects are particularly evident among the population in rural areas, who are dependent on making a living from agriculture. Women are among the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The reasons for

this are that, on the one hand, they account for the majority of the agricultural workforce in many countries while, on the other, they do not enjoy access to the same opportunities as men for earning an income.

The method of agriculture deployed in the millennium we have just entered requires human effort which needs to satisfy major demands: ensuring food security and safety for the world's population (expected to grow to 9 billion by 2050), harmonising measures supporting the quantitative and qualitative rise in agricultural production aimed at producing food with the development demands imposed by the production of biofuels, along with protecting ecosystems and breaking the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.

I believe that a new strategy needs to be adopted, based on a new approach focusing on sustainable agricultural production models, requiring compensatory aid to cover the additional costs linked to these objectives (e.g. local eco-certification contracts), as well as on the creation of 'green jobs' and the integration of women into the labour market (preservation of rural areas, biodiversity conservation, greenhouses for vegetables and flowers).

24. Agriculture in areas with natural handicaps: A special health check (short presentation)

President. - The next item is the report by Herbert Dorfmann, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on agriculture in areas with natural handicaps: a special health check (COM(2009)0161 – 2009/2156(INI)) (A7-0056/2010).

Herbert Dorfmann, rapporteur. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, in this report, we are concerned with a communication from the Commission regarding agriculture in areas with natural handicaps.

Specifically, it is about delimiting disadvantaged areas and, in particular, about finding new ways of delimiting them. They are currently defined on the basis of mainly or exclusively national criteria. There are over 100 of these criteria, and they are completely different in the different Member States of our Union.

This does not ensure uniformity, a state of affairs that the Court of Auditors has criticised on a number of occasions. In its communication, the Commission is now proposing a new way of delimiting these areas using eight different criteria, which are intended to lead to a complete re-definition of these areas.

Parliament does not know what impact these criteria will have because the area simulations that the Commission asked for from the Member States were not available when we were working on this report, nor did we get to look at these simulations.

I would like to summarise what we are now proposing in this report. We think that, in principle, a uniform method of delimitation is sensible and possibly also necessary to ensure uniformity within the European Union. We also believe that the compensatory allowance – which you could say is the most important result of this delimiting process, as this is primarily carried out so that these areas can receive compensatory payments – is an extremely important element of agricultural policy and, above all, makes agriculture possible where it would otherwise be very difficult, in other words, in disadvantaged areas, especially in mountainous areas.

However, we are unable to carry out an assessment of the quality of these criteria, that is to say, whether or not these criteria now work, because we currently have no access to any area simulations. There are nonetheless very specific doubts as to whether the proposed criteria will be sufficiently precise.

It also still needs to be clarified whether the criteria that the Commission is now proposing should actually be dealt with in this way, in other words separately, criterion by criterion, or whether, under certain circumstances, an accumulation of these criteria needs to be taken into account. The handicap is often associated with several factors at the same time and it seems perfectly sensible to us to consider whether it would not be absolutely essential to take an accumulation of these criteria into account.

We also need to consider whether the principle of subsidiarity should be taken into account in this regard, in other words, whether, in this case too, it would be necessary for us to draw up a rough framework using the new criteria and then give the Member States and the regions the opportunity to fine tune it.

Finally, I believe that it is essential to also consider having transitional periods. This delimitation will result in some areas being removed from the delimited areas and these areas need a sufficiently long transitional period.

In summary, I would like to say – and I believe that the report also reflects this opinion – that the current communication from the Commission still requires further refinement and that, before it is implemented, it needs to be given very careful consideration, because it will have far-reaching consequences for the farmers affected.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my fellow Members here in Parliament and also to the Commission staff who, over the last few months, have helped to put together this report.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, many thanks to the rapporteur for his excellent report. Subsidising disadvantaged areas is a core element of the common agricultural policy, with the aim of maintaining the universal spread of agriculture throughout Europe. The Commission's approach to develop a system that can be used EU-wide for delimiting these areas is therefore to be welcomed. The crucial point, however, is whether the eight criteria that have been developed to do this will actually be sufficient. I am not convinced that these are really the right criteria to use. I cannot understand – and I think the same can be said of the rapporteur and the entire Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development – why the Commission has not made the simulation results for the effects of these eight criteria available to us. I therefore appeal to the Commission: this really should not happen as often as it does.

When we want and need to evaluate something, we naturally also need to know the results. I view this to a certain extent as a lack of trust in Parliament. That means that, for this particular proposed regulation, there is still much to be done. I hope that the Commission will look closely at the Dorfmann report that we have made into our own report. Personally, I hope that Mr Dorfmann will be able to continue to have political input on this matter.

Martin Häusling (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, I, too, would like to thank Mr Dorfmann for his report. What he has presented clearly shows that there are still a few things that need to be clarified with regard to this matter. Like the speakers before me, I, too, think that the current framework for delimiting these areas is too rough and ready. Many parts of it do not meet the needs of disadvantaged regions. I question whether we will be able to manage with these natural criteria alone.

We also need to look closely at the social situation, which plays a major role in disadvantaged regions. As the payments for disadvantaged regions are vital for the survival of many holdings, the Commission needs to think once again about refining the current framework in order to give many regions a chance of survival.

I fear that implementation of the current system would lead to very large shifts which are not always comprehensible and will lead to a large amount of disquiet and uncertainty within agriculture. We ought to look at this again.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) It is very important that on the basis of the Dorfmann report, the common agricultural policy's budget continue to give priority to supporting agricultural areas with natural handicaps, since without such support, there would be serious ecological damage and social problems in these areas. It is gratifying that the Commission – and here the Commission deserves praise – leaves the identification of the eligible areas, based on the eight criteria, up to the Member States. At the same time, I would like to call attention to the fact that to this day, there are differences and discrimination between the Member States, not only as regards direct payments, which are imposed on new Member States, in particular, the Commissioner's own county, Latvia, and on other new Member States as well. In my country, supplying water to the sand dunes region (Homokhátság) is a concern, since the groundwater level has fallen by 4-5 metres over four decades, and the area has become a semi-desert. The same problem also arises in Southern Europe, and therefore finding a solution to the question of water management in the future common agricultural policy is of particular importance.

Michel Dantin (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, I would like to thank our colleague, Mr Dorfmann, for his excellent work on this report. I think it sums up perfectly the issue as it stands today in terms of the Commission's proposals.

It is the Commissioner whom I would like to address in particular. This work has been going on for several months now. It is creating great agitation within several of our countries' industries, which are threatened with reclassification, and this reclassification is happening or may happen at a time when – and this will be

the subject of tomorrow evening's oral question – many production sectors are experiencing particular difficulties. We therefore need to move forward and move forward quickly. I do not think we can wait three years to come up with a clear answer for the farmers who are affected by this delimitation exercise.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, it is extremely good that less-favoured regions have been particularly highlighted in this report. The really central idea, which probably everyone here supports, is that the preconditions for profitable agricultural production must be safeguarded everywhere in the EU, both now and in the future.

There seems to be a lot of confusion arising from the criteria for defining less favourable regions. We must focus particular attention on agriculture in less favourable regions, because previous reforms to the common agricultural policy have very often been carried out from the point of view of favourable regions.

In order that we can continue to grow in less favourable regions, it is extremely important to use proportional regulation mechanisms. The cancellation of some of the previous agricultural regulation mechanisms by the EU has not been successful. For example, the withdrawal of milk quotas and the abolition of the set-aside scheme have been unsuccessful decisions as far as less favourable regions are concerned.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the subsidising of European agriculture cannot be called into question. The reasons for the subsidies include a variety of conditions of production, such as climate, soil quality, the problem of access to water, the situation of the land and social and historical conditions. Most of these have a significant influence on the results of production and economic performance, and have influenced the current constituent elements of the common agricultural policy.

I share the views and fears of the author concerning the lack of expected effects of the new approach. Can it be that the criteria used up till now have been so inappropriate? We expect calculations and a more profound analysis of the effects. An important question is how to maintain agricultural production in less favoured areas. In my opinion, support for these areas still needs to be continued at a suitable level as part of the common agricultural policy in the future Financial Framework.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Dorfmann for an excellent report on the Commission communication entitled 'Towards a better targeting of the aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps'.

I would like to address a couple of issues. The overall objective of the natural handicap payments is to ensure continued land use and, through agricultural land management, maintain the countryside as well as to promote sustainable farming systems. The payments to farmers in these areas compensate farmers' additional costs and income forgone, which occur due to the existing natural handicap.

The Council has decided to remove the socio-economic criteria from the objectives of natural handicap payments. The removal of socio-economic criteria should be seen in the context of the whole suite of measures available to Member States in the Rural Development Regulation – the diversification into non-agricultural activities, the development of micro- and small and medium-sized enterprises and tourism activities, as well as the provision of basic services.

So, the natural handicap payments are not the intervention lever that aims to tackle this issue of depopulation. Compensating farmers in areas where production is not hampered by natural handicaps and where there is no additional cost or income forgone would distort competition with farmers in other areas. Furthermore, socio-economic indicators change over time and would, therefore, require a continual follow-up and revision process of each area concerned.

The proposal to take remoteness into account is not practical against the agreed framework set down by the Council, which relates to natural handicaps. In terms of their peripherality, there are other levels of delimitation possible, for example, the specific handicap article of the Regulation.

At the different stages of the process, the Commission invited Member States to submit alternative proposals for biophysical criteria and their thresholds. These proposals will be analysed by scientists for their validity and, above all, for their transparency and possible Community-wide applicability. The alternative thresholds, however, must lead to the conclusion that an area in question is affected by a significant handicap, as desired by the Council.

Once the exercise of testing a delimitation based on biophysical criteria is completed, the Commission proposal for the common agricultural policy after 2013 will take the results of this exercise into account.

Any legal proposal will also aim for a smooth transition for those areas which may lose their status of areas with a natural handicap.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place in two weeks' time, at the next part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE), in writing. – I would like to thank the rapporteur for his excellent work. Maintaining diverse and active rural areas is important for several reasons, not least because of growing global demand for food products and environmentally sustainable tourism. Additionally, it would be a serious setback in many areas to stop to cultivate the land, both in terms of vital rural income and the loss of landscape, which might have been formed during several centuries.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The aid scheme for areas affected by natural handicaps has effectively helped the farming of agricultural land to continue in these regions. The importance of granting appropriate compensatory payments for less favoured areas is indisputable.

The process for delimiting and classifying these areas has been carried out by Member States based on a number of criteria, according to their own set of indicators. However, it is extremely difficult even to compare these sets of indicators as they use different methods for classifying and weighting the regions. Establishing a common set of classification criteria would increase the scheme's transparency, reliability and efficiency across the whole of Europe. In this regard, I support the need to review the aid scheme for farmers in areas with natural handicaps and devise a global strategy for the less favoured areas, thereby reducing the disparities which have appeared between Member States in terms of allocating financial support.

James Nicholson (ECR), in writing. – We should remember that 54% of farmed land in the EU currently falls into a LFA classification. The continuation of the LFA scheme is vital if we are to compensate farmers for providing public goods, avoiding land abandonment, assisting in promoting biodiversity and helping to support rural communities. The market neither rewards nor compensates farmers for these achievements in areas where farming is at a natural disadvantage. We must, therefore, ensure that further reform of the LFA system is adequately financed within the overall budget for CAP and that the system used for classification is fair and non-discriminatory. In its initial communication, the eight biophysical criteria proposed by the Commission to assess the classification of areas with significant natural handicaps were undoubtedly biased towards the warmer and drier climates of continental Europe. Therefore, I was glad to see that amendments that mention 'soil moisture balance' and 'field capacity days' were passed at committee level. This is a first step in ensuring that countries in Northern Europe, such as the UK and Ireland, are not discriminated against in the framework of a new classification system.

25. Simplification of the CAP (short presentation)

President. - The next item is the report by Richard Ashworth, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on simplification of the CAP (COM(2009)0128 – 2009/2155(INI)) (A7-0051/2010).

Richard Ashworth, rapporteur. – Mr President, Commissioner, we are at the very early stages of the debate, which leads up to the common agricultural policy reform post 2012. In this report, I suggested some of the principles which should underlie the reformed common agricultural policy. It is clear that the agricultural industry needs to change. It will need to change in order to reflect both the challenges of the times in which we now live but more the times which are to come.

Those will be issues such as food security, market volatility, climate change, and the need to adequately meet the expectations for the delivery of public goods. It is clear, therefore, that the common agricultural policy has to change in order to reflect those challenges, but it is also clear that the way we apply the common agricultural policy needs to change.

In setting out these principles that should underlie the reformed common agricultural policy, I have deliberately not gone into detail; that will come in later reports. But what I have developed is two main themes. Firstly, that the common agricultural policy needs to be simpler, fairer and more transparent and that, secondly, the culture of the common agricultural policy needs to change, that a future reformed common agricultural policy ought to be more outcome-driven and less burdened with excessive regulation.

I have highlighted four ways in which we can reduce the bureaucratic burden on farm businesses. Firstly, we should ensure that the requirements made of the industry are proportionate to the risk assessed. Secondly, we could harmonise inspections standards and we should cut out the duplication of inspection standards and procedures required of the industry. Thirdly, there could or should be greater scope for self-certification within the industry and, fourthly, we need to ensure that the penalties imposed on farm businesses are commensurate to the scale of the infringement rather than the current inappropriate flat-rate penalties, especially in those cases where infringements were not the fault of the farmer.

In my view, one objective of the common agricultural policy should be to help and encourage the industry to adapt to these new challenges. To do that, there is a need for a change of culture in the common agricultural policy. It does need to adopt a more flexible, lighter-touch approach. There needs to be greater consultation with the stakeholders of the industry and, in particular, in order to better assess the impact of proposed regulation. It also needs to be easier to interpret. The reformed common agricultural policy must be able to publicly demonstrate the industry's delivery of public goods. It must find ways to reduce the cost to the industry of complying with its requirements and, finally, it must effectively and efficiently and fairly manage the industry.

This report sets out a number of ways that that can be achieved.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, the burden of managing agriculture must definitely be reduced as far as farmers are concerned, and these methods highlighted by the rapporteur are very welcome. Some farmers have said that they feel like criminals when trying to battle with the various administrative documents and regulations. The common agricultural policy needs to be simpler.

It also needs to be said that when more and more changes take place in the markets and EU import protection decreases, administrative and regulatory mechanisms for the market will be needed in the future as well. For example, stock-taking systems and possibly promotional activity for exports will also be necessary in the future.

It is clear that there can be no simple way of maintaining these systems. Particularly in the case of delicate products such as milk, we should create a system of regulation similar to a quota system; otherwise, production in less favourable regions will become impossible.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) I congratulate the rapporteur, since not only his specific proposals but the entire philosophy is excellent. Excellent because it seeks to give support in future to those who are actively farming, in other words, those who are, in fact, cultivating the land. I also consider excellent the point that it would be important to put an end to sectoral and other distortions in the future common agricultural policy and here, I would once again like to emphasise the discrimination against the new Member States. Similarly, it is very important not only that Community regulations be simplified, but much depends on implementation by Member States. Let me quote a typical example: two years ago, the Council adopted a regulation introducing the requirement for the compulsory individual electronic identification of each individual ovine and caprine animal intended for slaughter under the age of 12 months. In the case of the poorer Member States, where the State is unable to provide support, this rule impoverished the sector and placed it in a hopeless situation. This is another illustration of the way in which excessive regulation and excessive bureaucracy can often cause serious harm under the common agricultural policy, and constitutes yet another reason why Mr Ashworth's report is important, as are those of Mr Dorfmann and Mr Le Foll.

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, thank you, Mr Ashworth, for this excellent report. The common agricultural policy is a successful policy, but we sometimes cloud this success in excessive bureaucracy. That is just as true of the first pillar of the agricultural policy as it is of the second. However, it is particularly the case for small holdings, where the input of bureaucracy is sometimes quite simply disproportionate to the output represented by the money received.

In the course of reforming our agricultural policy, we need to consider having a regulation for small producers and how we can find a much simpler method for such holdings which, from various budget chapters, we often give a total of just a few hundred to a few thousand euro in premiums, without losing sight of our objectives and producing a lack of clarity in the granting of subsidies. That must be possible and we must endeavour to achieve it.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) Richard Ashworth's report on simplification of the common agricultural policy sets out excellent proposals. Its great merit is that it examines the question from the perspective of farmers. Naturally it is also important for taxpayers' money to be used in the most legitimate way possible. This,

however, is only a means, not an end. The goal is to fulfil all the tasks of the sectoral policy. The Boards of Agriculture often confuse these two things, to the detriment of the achievement of the goal. A radical change in perspective is needed. Instead of what we might describe as a culture of subordination among clients, farmers and officials, we need a culture of cooperation. The Commission should also draw up a regulation that imposes on the Boards of Agriculture an obligation to provide compensation and metes out sanctions on them if farmer's interests are harmed through their own fault. We must ensure that those with entitlements also have the right to turn to an independent court for remedy. In Hungary, this is not yet possible.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, simplification of the common agricultural policy is a beautiful idea, and it is hard to imagine that someone would oppose it. Simplification means a reduction in the number of inspections, a restriction of administration costs and a saving of time for the farmer. It is, indeed, wonderful.

However, I want to point to two cases which require a somewhat different approach. Firstly, there are special areas of production where it is difficult to simplify support instruments. I am thinking here of tobacco, hop and other specialist production of this kind. The second case is that of maintaining production in less favoured areas, where it is necessary to use very specific instruments for the support of production, which a previous speaker mentioned. I share the view of the author that the common agricultural policy, the policy of the future, should be clear and transparent, but it should also be effective, and effectiveness is something which does not always go hand-in-hand with simplicity.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, European agricultural policy must be made simpler, more transparent and easier to understand. That is the message conveyed by the rapporteur, Mr Ashworth, and it is a good message and the right one.

Our report is intended to encourage the Commission to intensify its efforts to simplify the common agricultural policy (CAP) in a tangible way. Doing so would save our farmers a lot of time and money and would increase social acceptance of the CAP.

Our farmers would also be able to concentrate on their real job again, namely producing food. I would therefore like to see the simplification of the common agricultural policy made a long-term task here in Parliament and in the Commission.

Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, simplification and better regulation are priorities for the Commission. I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Ashworth, for an excellent report in this rather complicated and challenging area.

The Commission fully agrees that simplification and reduction of administrative burden should be of particular benefit for farmers. This will enable the farmers to spend more time on their core agricultural activities. The Commission welcomes the report presented; it generally tackles the main areas of concern of European farmers and provides the Commission with new ideas and observations with regard to simplifying the common agricultural policy.

During the past years, the Commission has made substantial progress in simplifying the common agricultural policy. I would like to give just one proof of this: the Stoiber Group, which advises the Commission on the topic of administrative burden, has clearly indicated that the level of red tape for farmers has been reduced considerably as a result of simplification activities carried out by the Commission. But simplification is an ongoing process; work will continue in 2010.

Moreover, there is an overall reflection process on the future of the common agricultural policy. We have already launched a public debate, and that means that we will have to all work together to find efficient ways to reduce the administrative burden while maintaining a high level of protection of the European Union's financial interest and, at the same time, a very efficient agriculture. In this process, I would also warn about one desire, and will just mention one example of it. Sometimes, simplification should not be made at the expense of the challenge that we could face. Take as an example traceability. We have, in recent years, had a peaceful situation, with no major scandals or outbreaks of epidemics, but, at the same time, traceability is the key. We should not just abolish it because we have not had any crises. So I believe that in the whole process, we should be very careful when we simplify; we should not forget the lessons of the past and the reasons why we introduced particular rules. So the Commission will continue to work on this process and we will be very careful not to forget the lessons learned.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place in two weeks' time, at the next part-session in Brussels.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) The new system must be based on objective and fair criteria. Reducing differences in payments in different Member States is essential to achieving this objective. Prices for the transportation of goods, agricultural machines and fertilisers and the costs of work have a similar ceiling in many countries. For the conditions of competition in the single market to be the same, the level of basic direct payments must be the same or comparable throughout the Union. The time has come for principles which are in force in other areas of the economy to take effect in agriculture, too. It should also be remembered that the new Member States need significant means to support the modernisation and reconstruction of agriculture and to catch up with the countries of the 'old fifteen'.

26. Agenda of the next sitting: see Minutes

27. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 23.00)