

THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR ROUČEK

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.00)

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Implementing measures (Rule 88): see Minutes

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

5. The European Ombudsman's activities (2008) (debate)

President. – The next item is the report by Chrysoula Paliadeli, on behalf of the Committee on Petitions, on the annual report on the European Ombudsman's activities in 2008 (2009/2088(INI)).

Chrysoula Paliadeli, rapporteur. – (EL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner, on 21 April 2009, the European Ombudsman submitted his annual report on his activities in 2008 to the outgoing President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Poettering. On 14 September of the same year, Mr Nikiforos Diamandouros presented the contents of that same report to the Committee on Petitions, which had already commissioned me to draft a report, which was approved unanimously by the members of the Committee on Petitions on 1 October 2009.

The written report consists of two documents: a brief, six-page overview and an extensive version which goes into the Ombudsman's activities, the statistics and the interpretation of them in greater detail, in the aim of improving procedure and best practice.

The data and the findings – in both documents – are presented in a user-friendly way using some illustrative examples which help the reader to understand, evaluate and make use of the text.

Compared with previous reports, this new presentation of the statistical data and the evaluation of the findings has made the report more comprehensible and, above all, more useful, because it goes beyond the limits of a mere record, addressing policy issues and methods of improvement.

An unprecedented number of inquiries was completed in 2008. Most of these cases concerned the European Commission and far fewer concerned the administration of the European Parliament. The most common type of maladministration was lack of transparency. One third of cases were settled amicably to the satisfaction of the complainant. There were fewer instances in which the Ombudsman was forced to make critical remarks to the administrative institutions involved. There were even fewer in which a detailed opinion was requested, while in one case, a special report was submitted to Parliament, resulting in a special resolution in favour of the complainant. In 2008, the Ombudsman completed an own-initiative inquiry into late payments by the Commission, as a result of which measures were taken to limit late payments and a new investigation was announced. The Ombudsman's basic priority was to ensure that citizens' rights are respected in the aim of strengthening the confidence of European citizens in its institutions.

This aim was served by his choosing to improve the quality of information provided to citizens concerning their rights via the European Network of Ombudsmen. At the same time, with the usual practices for resolving issues imposed by his institutional role, the Ombudsman strengthened contacts with the members and officials of the European institutions, thereby promoting a culture of service within the administrative services of the Union, which certainly contributes towards the general objective of mutual respect between European citizens and the European institutions. One tangible result of this campaign was the increase in 2008 in the number of petitions, which is an indication of the fact that a larger number of European citizens had been informed of, and decided to make use of, the institution of the Ombudsman in order to complain about

issues relating to the sound administration and operation of the administrative and other services of the European Union.

The Ombudsman's website was updated regularly throughout 2008 in order to transform it into a modern, dynamic and interactive service. To close the first phase of this oral report on the European Ombudsman's annual report, we expect constructive activity with the European Parliament to continue in the same way, for the activity of this institution to be promoted as a model of sound administration to the national administrative authorities and for this institution to continue to act as a communication channel between the European institutions and the citizens of Europe.

Nikiforos Diamandouros, *European Ombudsman*. – Mr President, thank you for this opportunity to address Parliament on my annual report for 2008.

I wish to thank the Committee on Petitions, and especially the chair, Mrs Mazzoni and the rapporteur, Mrs Paliadeli, for their helpful and constructive report. I enjoy an excellent working relationship with the committee. It offers me valuable support and advice whilst fully respecting my duty, as Ombudsman, of impartiality and independence.

Parliament and the Ombudsman both work to ensure that citizens and residents of the EU can enjoy their rights to the full. We do so in different ways. The Ombudsman's mandate is more limited; I can only deal with complaints against EU institutions and bodies, whilst the Petitions Committee can also examine what Member States are doing. Furthermore, Parliament is a sovereign political body and can deal with petitions that request changes in the law, or even new laws. In contrast, my role is in dealing with complaints, helping complainants uncover maladministration and attempting to put it right.

Unlawful behaviour, when it falls within my mandate, is always a form of maladministration. However, it is not enough for EU institutions and bodies merely to follow the law. They must also act consistently and in good faith. They must act in accordance with the rules and principles which they have adopted, and they must demonstrate that they are service-minded, for example, by acting fairly, reasonably and courteously. Indeed, the generation and maintenance of a culture of service to citizens lies at the very heart of the principle of good administration.

The Ombudsman's privileged relationship with Parliament is key to ensuring results for citizens. Unlike court rulings, an Ombudsman's decisions are not legally binding. I can only use the power of persuasion to convince EU institutions and bodies to follow my recommendations. Where they refuse to do so, it is of fundamental importance that the Ombudsman can turn to Parliament to seek its support.

For instance, when an institution does not comply with a recommendation in a case which raises fundamental questions of principle, I can issue a special report to Parliament. One example from 2008 was the refusal of the Commission to change its stance in an age discrimination case. I was gratified that Parliament dealt with this report expeditiously and that Mr Martínez Martínez's report, adopted by plenary in May 2009 without a single vote against, reflected entirely the concerns I had raised.

My annual report records the progress made in handling complaints, promoting good administration and providing information about the Ombudsman's role. As explained in its opening pages, strenuous efforts have been made to improve its user-friendliness so that readers can easily obtain a clear and comprehensive account of the Ombudsman's work.

It has also now proven possible to publish the report much earlier in the year than before. In addition, a new six-page overview has been produced. This new publication records the most important results obtained for complainants, and highlights the main policy issues dealt with over the past year.

The Ombudsman closed a record number of enquiries in 2008 – 355 to be exact – with most taking less than a year. I am happy to say that the EU institutions and bodies have shown that in general, they are keen to resolve issues that I bring to their attention. The increased number of friendly solutions and settlement of cases is both positive and praiseworthy.

Eight cases closed in 2008 exemplify best practice among the institutions and bodies in responding to issues I raised. The institutions and bodies concerned are the Commission, the Council, the Court of Justice, EPSO, OLAF and the European Aviation Safety Agency. The eight star cases are included in the report as models of good administrative behaviour for all institutions and bodies.

Let me briefly mention just two of these cases.

The Commission was constructive throughout the procedure concerning a payment dispute. As a result, the company concerned received more than EUR 100 000 in outstanding payments.

EPSO agreed to disclose to candidates, at their request, the evaluation criteria used in selection procedures, as well as a breakdown of individual marks.

In 2008, the Ombudsman registered a total of 3 406 complaints. This represents a 6% increase compared to 2007.

In almost 80% of all cases registered, help was provided to the complainant by opening an inquiry, transferring the complaint to a competent body or giving advice. Often, such advice is to contact a member of the European network of Ombudsmen. This network now consists of roughly 95 offices in 32 countries and includes the Committee on Petitions. One of its purposes is to facilitate the rapid transfer of complaints to the competent body. In 2008, for example, 191 complainants were either advised to petition Parliament or their complaints were directly transferred to the Committee on Petitions.

Of course, it is much better if complainants can identify the most appropriate avenue of redress the first time around. This helps avoid the frustration involved for citizens who are told that the body that they have turned to is not able to help them. It also means that complaints are resolved more promptly and effectively, thus ensuring that citizens can fully enjoy their rights under EU law.

A very important initiative in this area came to fruition earlier this year. My office launched an entirely new website, including an interactive guide in all 23 languages, to help citizens address directly the body best equipped to deal with their complaint. This body may be my own department, the Committee on Petitions, the national ombudsman's department in the complainant's Member State of origin, or the cross-border online network, SOLVIT. So far this year, over 23 000 people have used the guide to obtain advice.

In 2008, by far the most common allegation I examined was lack of transparency in the EU administration. This allegation arose in 36% of all inquiries and included refusal of information or documents. It is with a certain degree of concern that I have noted this high percentage.

An accountable and transparent EU administration is, and must remain, key to building citizens' trust in the EU. Of particular importance regarding transparency in 2008 was the Commission's proposal to reform Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to documents.

The Commission has proposed changes to this Regulation, some of which would be very beneficial. However, in my estimation, some other proposed changes would result in citizens having access to fewer, not more, documents.

The Lisbon Treaty changes the legal and political context of the Regulation by giving citizens more opportunities to participate in the activities of the Union. Its entry into force will provide a good opportunity for the Commission to submit a new proposal that would reflect this new reality and would strengthen the fundamental right of access to documents of the EU's institutions and bodies.

The support of Parliament was crucial in securing the revision of the Ombudsman's statute in 2008. The changes effected strengthen the Ombudsman's powers of investigation, thereby ensuring that citizens can have full confidence in the Ombudsman's ability to conduct a thorough investigation of their complaints without restrictions.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that my task is to promote good administration in EU institutions and bodies. Maximising transparency and accountability, and promoting and helping entrench a culture of service to citizens, are key factors in the fulfilment of this task.

I am confident that our two institutions will continue to work closely in pursuit of the shared goal of helping citizens and residents to enjoy their rights fully in a transparent and accountable European Union.

Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, first of all I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mrs Paliadeli, for a very good report, and the Committee on Petitions for its enduring and important work. Of course, my thanks also go to the Ombudsman, Mr Diamandouros, for his thorough and complete annual report.

As the Ombudsman pointed out when he presented his annual report back in April this year, the crucial work is about building citizens' trust in the EU. It will come as no surprise that I totally agree with that. I do not have much time at my disposal, so would like to concentrate on just a few important points.

The Paliadeli report offers a clear, exhaustive overview of the Ombudsman's activities for the past year, and the new presentation for statistics and new layout makes this report accessible and easy to read. In 2008, the Commission contributed an opinion to the negotiations on the review of the Ombudsman's Statute. We took an active part in the interinstitutional work to reach a satisfactory solution. We can all be proud of the result, which is the new Statute. I believe it is a result that citizens will benefit from.

Regarding complaints to the Ombudsman, we saw a 6% increase compared with 2007. As you know, 66% of the enquiries focused on the Commission. I do not see this as particularly strange. After all, the Commission is a fairly big institution with many more areas of responsibility likely to be targeted by complainants but, of course, the figures can and should be improved. That is also true of the fact that the most frequent claims for maladministration concern a lack of transparency – namely 36% of all enquiries. Such figures need to be brought down by all institutions.

A different, but related, subject is that of the treatment of information relating to business secrets and confidential information. Recently, we have seen some difficulties in relation to competition files. For this reason, we need to define modalities for the treatment of classified information, documents and other information covered by the obligation of professional secrecy. The Commission has been working hard on this issue and we will soon be able to submit a proposal to the Ombudsman.

Another positive development is the increase in the number of friendly solutions, as we have already heard. In 2008, 36% of all investigations were either settled by the institution complained against or resulted in a friendly solution. For the Commission, I am glad to say that the trend is definitely moving in the right direction. This shows both an awareness and an acknowledgement of the Ombudsman's work, as well as respect for the complainants.

My second to last point is about the call made in the draft resolution for a common approach to a code of good administrative behaviour. As you know, the Commission has its own code, and that is broadly in line with the requirements of the Ombudsman. This important matter is best brought forward by first having a constructive interinstitutional debate and dialogue before presenting a legislative proposal.

My last point is about communication in practice. Here I want to commend the Ombudsman on his new website. Just like the annual report, it is thorough, complete and user-friendly. When it comes to developing an interactive handbook to help citizens identify the most appropriate forum for solving their problems, I firmly believe that this excellent new website tackles the problem. The work should not be duplicated, but be given enhanced visibility. From the Commission's side, we have tried to contribute to this, and the new Europa website does exactly that. It enhances visibility and citizens can easily find the Ombudsman's guide in a couple of clicks.

So, all in all, in 2008 we saw both progress and possibilities for further improvements by our institutions. I would again like to thank Mr Diamandouros for his achievements and important work and Mrs Paliadeli for her excellent report.

Pascale Gruny, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr Diamandouros, ladies and gentlemen, I should like first of all, on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), to congratulate the rapporteur most sincerely on the work she has done and on the spirit of cooperation she has shown throughout the process of drafting this report.

We are giving our verdict today on the annual report on the European Ombudsman's activities, which was presented on 21 April.

Appointed by the European Parliament, the Ombudsman gives us a formal account, via this report, of all the results of his inquiries into complaints concerning cases of maladministration within our European institutions and agencies. His role, which is of the utmost importance, represents an essential guarantee that the principles of transparency and good administration will be respected and therefore constitutes a genuine form of protection for our fellow citizens in cases of injustice, discrimination, abuses of power, outstanding responses and delayed information.

Indeed, in this report we note the increasing number of complaints lodged with the Ombudsman. The majority concern the European Commission, the institution that, admittedly, comprises the largest number of officials, but essentially, they are cases of an alleged lack of transparency. The fact remains that the Commission is the guardian of the Treaties.

Coming back to the report, the Committee on Petitions approved it by a large majority on 1 October. Our Ombudsman has carried out his job of examining and processing the complaints in an active and balanced way. In particular, he has always been able to maintain good relations with and between the institutions, which has helped the institutions and agencies in question to accept an amicable solution or to settle certain disputes, with a few exceptions.

Moreover, the Ombudsman serves as a resource for the institutions. He helps them to improve their performance by drawing their attention to areas for improvement, the ultimate goal being to improve the service to be provided to our fellow citizens.

The report that we have adopted in committee underlines and points out the importance of the adoption of a code of good administrative behaviour by all of the European institutions and agencies, a code that was already approved by the European Parliament eight years ago. This repeated call by our committee must not remain unanswered. Europeans deserve nothing less.

The right to good administration by the institutions and bodies of the European Union is a fundamental right laid down in Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union included in Part II of the Treaty of Lisbon, which is no longer a fantasy but a reality.

Lastly, I feel the need to point out that the Ombudsman reserves the right to scrutinise the work of the Commission and must ensure that the latter makes proper use of its discretionary power to start infringement proceedings or to propose sanctions.

Victor Boştinaru, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (RO) First of all, I would like to congratulate our rapporteur, Mrs Paliadeli, for her excellent report.

Secondly, in my role as coordinator for the Committee on Petitions and as a member of the Committee of several years standing, I would like to welcome and mention the excellent cooperation and collaboration we have continually had with the European Ombudsman, Nikiforos Diamandouros.

As the coordinator of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament for the Committee on Petitions, I must express concern about the large number of cases where alleged maladministration was caused by a lack of transparency on the part of the European institutions.

I must stress that it is the duty of both the European Parliament and the Committee to resolve this problem. It is our duty to restore European citizens' confidence in the European institutions.

The complaints submitted to the Ombudsman, along with the petitions submitted to the Committee on Petitions, must be seen as an opportunity to rectify errors and lack of clarity regarding how Europe's institutions and legislation operate, for the good of European citizens.

With this in mind, the S&D Group organised last week an information seminar, attended by a large group of journalists, on the right of petition as a means of bringing the European Union closer to its citizens.

I would like to support the suggestion put forward in this report about setting up a common website for European institutions, intended to help citizens identify directly which institution is able to settle their complaint.

Finally, I wish to support the European Ombudsman's initiative in strengthening cooperation with national ombudsmen and similar institutions in a joint effort to reinforce the trust of European citizens.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FI) Mr President, Mr Diamandouros, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank the Ombudsman and his entire Office for the valuable work they have done to promote good governance and transparency. I would also like to thank the rapporteur for her excellent work.

The post of European Ombudsman has proven to be a necessary one right from the start, and now that the Treaty of Lisbon is to enter into force and the Charter of Fundamental Rights will be binding, the Ombudsman's role will be more important than ever. That is why, in future, we will need to do more to ensure that the Ombudsman has the necessary resources and that his or her powers are relevant to the present times. This will mean that he or she is in possession of all necessary information and that EU officials will have to say what they know about something as opposed to what they want to say. Otherwise, we will not be able to speak of the rule of law, which we are so fond of talking and teaching others about. We also have to comply with the rule of law: after that, we can tell others about it.

The Ombudsman's annual report is a splendid example of how we too should present the work that we do to the public. The report is clear, concise and to the point. Transparency is the key to European democracy and is its main building material, and it is interesting that 36% of complaints relate to this very notion of a lack of transparency. That says a lot and the matter needs to be addressed.

Under the Charter of Fundamental Rights, every citizen has the right to have his or her affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by these institutions. That has been mentioned frequently and it puts all of us under an obligation, and that obviously applies to the Ombudsman's Office as well. I would therefore like to stress that we need to ensure that there are the right resources in place so that our citizens do not have to wait years for a decision. That will depend on resources more than anything. I would like to thank the Ombudsman for the valuable work that he has done and wish him every success in this very, very challenging and sometimes also far too underrated job. It is one of the most important jobs and functions in the European Union: attending to the rights of citizens.

Margrete Auken, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DA) Mr President, my thanks to Mrs Paliadeli for a splendid report. The Ombudsman has received a large amount of praise for his constructive and easy-to-follow overview of the issues, and I would like to add my voice to those praising him.

There is not much time, so I will restrict myself to just three points. The first thing I would like to mention is the Ombudsman's monitoring of his agreement with the European Investment Bank. This was an initiative that our group took in connection with Parliament's resolution on the 2006 annual report. In this regard, it would seem right to draw attention to the improvements in the bank's cooperation with NGOs and other civil society players that make this cooperation easier and more transparent, and we are grateful for these.

Secondly, I would like to mention the amendment proposed by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance calling on the Committee on Constitutional Affairs to draw up procedures to make it easier to bring cases before the Court of Justice, with regard to which Parliament will support the Ombudsman's recommendations. This will bring about a tangible strengthening of the Ombudsman's position and therefore also of the legal status of the citizens. This is something that we previously received Parliament's support for in principle. We now hope that, during this plenary sitting, Parliament will follow the Committee's lead and vote in favour of this improvement.

My third point is about the amendment we have tabled today for making the Ombudsman's authority clearer in matters of poor administration – maladministration, in other words. In this connection, we are concerned that the very open wording may give rise to serious problems in interpretation. Although our proposal looks quite technical, it is considerably more secure from a legal point of view than the wording in the report. We are pleased that Mrs Paliadeli has given her support to the proposal and I hope, of course, that Parliament as a whole will support it too.

Ryszard Czarnecki, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, Mr Diamandouros, you are a very skilful politician, Mr Diamandouros, and you know how to win the support of many political groupings in our Parliament. We might say that a number of politicians in our Parliament could learn from you. I hope that your main success will not be the creation of a new, easy to access website.

I think you should give attention to working with ombudsmen from different countries, not just from EU Member States, but also from the Member States of the Council of Europe, because they sometimes do more to represent the state to the citizens than the citizens to the state. Furthermore, I think that compiling a textbook on how to write complaints will be a downright discouragement to citizens to actually write them. It seems to me that our institutions need supervision. It is my conviction that this idea, although subversive, is what is needed here.

I would like to stress that the transparency we are talking about here is an absolutely fundamental prerequisite for complete trust in the European Union and EU institutions. Recently, our citizens have been lacking in trust towards the EU, as Mrs Paliadeli can confirm. Under Plan D (democracy, dialogue, debate), we need to show the citizens that the European Union and its institutions are transparent and are serving the citizens. Otherwise, the democratic deficit will, unfortunately, become wider.

Marie-Christine Vergiat, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the role of the Ombudsman, and thus the examination of his report, constitutes an important element for the European institutions. Indeed, it is one of the indicators of the perception that our fellow citizens have of our institutions.

A few months on from the European elections, where we all regretted the low turnout, indeed the rise in abstentions, the importance that Parliament attaches to this report is therefore crucial. This is all the more true with regard to the follow-up to the recommendations made in it.

355 complaints (a 6% increase on the previous year) is very little. It is very little in the context of the 500 million people living in Europe. One could be delighted with this and see it as a sign that our fellow citizens are satisfied. We know that they are nothing of the sort.

From this perspective, the fact that most of the complaints relate to the lack of transparency in our institutions is also revealing. Coming out of an election campaign, we know what this is all about. Our fellow citizens have a poor understanding of our institutions and do not know how they work. They do not see the point of Europe, and it is not surprising that most of the complaints concern the Commission since, in the eyes of our fellow citizens, the Commission is the European Union.

However – I am exaggerating here, but only slightly – the communication posts have largely been budgeted for, and we have been told, since the elections: ‘we have to improve communication, we have to enhance it so as to increase our fellow citizens’ awareness’.

Admittedly, we do have to improve communication, but I believe that too much communication kills information. I shall willingly endorse the proposal – which has just been put to us by our fellow socialist Member – to have a common site that steers citizens towards the diverse information available to them.

This report is an indicator of the proper functioning of our institutions, of good administration. That has already been said. It is an indicator of our governance. It is therefore crucial to ensure that its recommendations are followed, not only for the sake of the report, and in particular the special reports, but also as an everyday practice.

Many thanks, Mr Diamandouros, for your work with our fellow citizens. Many thanks to your team. You can count on our support to promote and facilitate your work.

Nikolaos Salavrakos, on behalf of the EFD Group. – (EL) Mr President, may I say from the outset that we support the Ombudsman’s report and Mrs Paliadeli’s report, which are comprehensive, and for that we congratulate them. History has taught us that, at certain times, especially in times of economic crisis, citizens express manifest disappointment in the political systems regarding the dispensation of justice while, at the same time, the greater the influence a state has at economic and social level, the greater the number of disputes there are between citizens and the bodies of state.

The point is that the political system must – of course always, but especially in such times – create outlets for restoring citizens’ confidence in the administration, the state and unions. I would even go so far as to say that the counterweight to an increase in corruption and maladministration is to increase the morality of institutions and the impartiality of audit bodies.

It is easy to see from the above thought that I consider the institution of the European Ombudsman to be extremely important in restoring the confidence of European citizens in the institutions and bodies of the European Union and, as such, we support every effort designed to strengthen this institution, expand its remit and improve its public image.

I would therefore ask that we all endeavour to provide every assistance to the work of the European Ombudsman and adopt all aspects of his action to achieve a citizen-centred approach. Congratulations Mr Diamandouros.

Martin Ehrenhauser (NI). – (DE) Mr President, young students have asked me to report on current events and goings on in Austria and also in parts of Germany here in the plenary session of the European Parliament. Ombudsman, my apologies, as I am going to comply with that request at this point.

A social movement known as *Die Uni brennt*, or University Ablaze, has taken shape in Austria over a number of weeks. It is a movement the like of which has not been seen in Austria and other parts of Europe for decades. Thousands of students are demonstrating, they are taking to the streets and occupying lecture theatres. They are demanding academic rather than vocational education, they are calling for a democratisation of the universities and, above all, they are demanding free access to education.

One of their main points of criticism is the Bologna Process. For example, there is a banner at the University of Vienna reading ‘Make Bologna the process!’, which is very fitting, I think. Traditional politicians have been

vaunting the Bologna Process as the crucial step towards a European Higher Education Area for years and have told us that that would make us all much more competitive. Ultimately, the result is a highly inflexible schematic approach, partly-privatised universities, that would make it possible to plan educational output.

Scholasticism, however, is anything but a plannable process. It is the way in which enlightened people communicate with one another and articulate themselves. Scholarly curiosity and scholarly creativity likewise cannot be planned: this movement has proved that once again. For that reason, we should, in fact, support it – it is democracy in action.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as Chairman of the Committee on Petitions and on behalf of all of the committee's members, I wish to thank the Ombudsman for the work he has done and for the precise report he has produced. I would like to thank Mrs Paliadeli for the excellent contribution she has made to the work of our committee and everyone who has participated in the debate, because they are showing an interest and paying attention with the aim of ensuring that these instruments of democracy and participation are implemented and fulfil the objective that they are intended to fulfil in the Treaties.

Studying the 2008 report of the European Ombudsman, we see that, unfortunately, the objective of applying the principle enshrined in Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights is still far from being met. The right to report cases of maladministration to the Ombudsman, exercised by 3 406 European citizens in 2008, demonstrates an increasing level of dissatisfaction, given that in 2007, the figure was 3 211. I believe that this figure should be compared with the level of knowledge and awareness and thus, I maintain, in opposition to the assertion made by the Member who spoke earlier, that these figures testify to a high level of dissatisfaction among Europeans. Moreover, it is some consolation to learn that only part of these complaints were considered to come under the remit of the European Ombudsman, because a large proportion of the complaints not taken up by the European Ombudsman were transferred to other bodies, including the Committee on Petitions, which I chair.

What we, as European institutions and, in particular, as Parliament, must also take responsibility for, in my view, is people's perception of administrative fairness, how fair our institutions are perceived to be. In spite of the positive confirmation that the European Ombudsman is playing a more functional role, given the increased number of successfully resolved cases, we as Parliament, having received around 10% of the complaints, and as a committee, having received 60%...

(The President reminded the speaker of her speaking time)

In that case, may I simply add – given that you granted a little more time to someone else, I thought I could allow myself a few seconds more, Mr President, since I am also a chairman – that these institutions have a duty to take steps to improve these instruments of democracy and participation, because we also have the Treaty of Lisbon, which introduces the right of popular initiative. I believe that we must improve, though not change, the functions of these bodies; we have a duty to improve the effectiveness and the productivity of the instruments that we have given to the citizens, if we really want to help build a Europe of the peoples.

Kinga Göncz (S&D). – (HU) As a member of the Committee on Petitions, I too would like to say a few words. In one respect, I give my full support to the acceptance of the European Ombudsman's report. As a member of the Committee, I also see that he has performed his job in a very balanced way.

What I consider extremely important is that he has attempted to reduce the time spent processing cases. After all, we know that if anyone has a complaint, from the point of view of trust, it is vitally important that the quicker this complaint is dealt with, the quicker the complainant receives a reply. We are also aware that the majority of the complaints are ones which the Ombudsman cannot deal with. From this perspective, it will be paramount in the near future for us to provide the European Union's citizens with as much information as possible about which institution they can contact for various issues.

Cooperation between the Committee and Ombudsman was extremely good, and I hope that the same will be true in the near future as well.

Marian Harkin (ALDE). – Mr President, I want to congratulate the rapporteur on a very comprehensive report, and the Ombudsman and his staff. The service is improving year on year. A job well done.

However, when you read through a report and you agree with its contents, and then in the explanatory statement, you see a substantial paragraph which relates to yourself, you cannot ignore it.

What, of course, I am referring to is the paragraph where the Ombudsman criticises Parliament because, back in 2005, it rejected a request for information about the allowances paid to Maltese MEPs. Of course, the real issue was that, if that information was released, then information regarding all our allowances would have to be revealed.

As far as I am concerned, this is public money, and the public have a right to know how it is spent. We have published the amounts paid to farmers under the CAP, yet we are not publishing our own travel expenses and other allowances. As far as I am concerned, they are legitimate costs. They are incurred in doing our job on behalf of citizens. Again, my allowances for staff, for office, for travel, etc. in order to represent my constituents are entirely legitimate, and I do not need to apologise for them and I do not need to conceal them.

I am not suggesting that the privacy of my staff be compromised in any way: it does not need to be. But I am saying very clearly that, until we allow freedom of information on our allowances and expenses, citizens will see Parliament as a place which preaches transparency but does not enforce it in its own House.

I know individual Members can and do publish their expenses on their websites, but we as a Parliament have a collective responsibility to make the information available. Maybe it sounds like I am taking the high moral ground; I am not. I am merely saying it will happen, and it would be better that Parliament facilitate it rather than be pushed to do so.

Oriol Junqueras Vies (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Mr President, as a member of the Committee on Petitions, I would like to add a couple of observations on the amendment tabled by our group in relation to the Paliadeli report on the annual report on the European Ombudsman's activities.

In our view, far from increasing and buttressing the role of the Ombudsman, the definition of maladministration that appears in the resolution could have exactly the opposite effect. Firstly, this is because the proposed definition, being excessively slack and vague, makes it difficult to determine the cases in which the Ombudsman can or should intervene and therefore weakens his capacity to take action. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, the definition accords the Ombudsman a capacity for intervention that other institutions may easily regard as discretionary, because it is not properly defined and regulated.

For these reasons, we consider that the definition of maladministration contained in our amendment, tabled by my group, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, is more detailed and concise and would be a much more appropriate basis for active, effective intervention, as well as being much easier for institutions and citizens to understand.

Oldřich Vlasák (ECR). – (CS) Mr President, Ombudsman, ladies and gentlemen, I value highly the activities of the European public defender of rights, but I have to say that I see three major problems in the activities of this office. The first problem is information. The wider public in the EU, in fact, does not know that such a thing as the European Ombudsman exists, let alone being able to guess what he does and the issues that they can bring to his attention. The facts are relatively clear. Almost 90% of the complaints submitted by my fellow countrymen from the Czech Republic did not fall within the remit of the European Ombudsman. The situation is no different for other Member States. The European Parliament is therefore proposing an extensive information campaign. I am not sure, however, whether we are trying to cure the right illness.

The second problem is costs. Every public institution comes at a price. With every new institution, there is an increase in the amount of bureaucracy which citizens must cope with and which they have to find their way through. It is therefore necessary to consider whether the taxpayers' money invested has brought the desired results. Last year, my fellow countrymen made 66 complaints to the European public defender of rights out of almost 800 cases from the EU as a whole that fell within the remit of the European ombudsman. These problems were handled by 70 officials, costing the taxpayer EUR 9 million. Each case taken on therefore cost more than EUR 10 000. In my opinion, that is excessive.

The third problem is subsidiarity. As a former mayor, I was rather disturbed to read that one of the few cases taken on by the ombudsman involved the planning document for the small district of Břeclav in relation to high-speed communications. I consider this to be completely unnecessary as local problems should first be dealt with locally and not here in Brussels or Strasbourg. Ladies and gentlemen, if I were in charge of this institution, I would ensure that it acted sensibly, that it operated at the lowest possible cost, and especially that it did not abuse and artificially extend its powers and its bureaucracy. In this respect, I would like to wish the Ombudsman much success.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, I support and shall vote in favour of Mrs Paliadeli's report and wish to congratulate Mr Diamandouros on the work which he has carried out. I should like to emphasise the fact that many European citizens are often faced with what we euphemistically refer to as acts of maladministration which ultimately rob them of basic rights. In my view, these acts are not due to bureaucracy or negligence, often, they are due to mistaken or the wrong policy adopted by the institutions of the European Union. Consequently, recourse to the European Ombudsman gives European citizens the facility to enforce respect for their rights.

It is therefore important for the European Parliament, the only directly elected and representative body of the European Union, to give political support to the work of the European Ombudsman so that, where possible, such acts are limited. May I say that it is clear from the report that the European Ombudsman, and from the specific work of the present European Ombudsman, that, with this sort of support from the European Parliament, he will be able to do his work more effectively over the next period.

To close, I feel that an effort must be made to give European citizens more information about the role and powers of the European Ombudsman, so that they take fast recourse to him when their basic rights are infringed.

Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, I would like my first words to be words of congratulation, as is only right, to Mrs Paliadeli, on the report she has presented, first of all before the Committee on Petitions and now here in plenary.

I would also like to endorse the very sensible comments made by Mrs Gruny and Mrs Mazzoni, my colleagues in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), but, Mr President, I would like to add that the role of the Ombudsman is essential in a democratic institution. That is the conclusion that we in the Committee on Petitions have drawn, during the many visits by Mr Diamandouros to present his annual reports, like the one we are today examining in this House, or other reports within his remit.

Ladies and gentlemen, I do not propose to drown you in numbers. However, although progress has been made in the role of the Ombudsman, I have no doubt that if we were to conduct a survey of European citizens on the role of the Ombudsman, his work and his activities, we would unfortunately find that citizens see him as remote and, in many cases, are not even aware of his existence. Perhaps this is because the Ombudsman's decisions are not binding, as he himself reminded us here, or perhaps because his work is very restricted as far as the Member States are concerned, as Mr Diamandouros has pointed out in this House.

However, if we want to provide a service to citizens, then this institution – the European Parliament – and the Committee on Petitions must make an effort to strengthen and promote the work of the Ombudsman. While there are certainly many petitions, as has been pointed out here, especially on the lack of transparency, I am sure that the proper provision of information – such as the new website, which is now working, which I welcome – would make a much greater contribution, and I would like to insist on this point, to the objective that, I think, will be endorsed by all: that all citizens of the European Union should be aware of and be able to contact the Ombudsman. For this reason, I wish the Ombudsman all the luck in the world and every success, because his successes will be the successes of European citizens as a whole.

Alan Kelly (S&D). – Mr President, I would like to begin by complimenting Mrs Paliadeli on her excellent report. All of us in this Chamber are playing a role in what we might call 'citizens' trust building'. However, it is extremely important that we build our European institutions on the visions and ideas of those selfsame citizens and on what they believe democracy should be.

The function of the Office of the Ombudsman has never been more important and the work of that Office must be commended. However, we must recognise that the lack of transparency, and our citizens' view of this, still remains a major issue, especially in the Commission. While I welcome the development of the new website, I do not believe it is the be all and end all.

After all, over one third of complaints relating to European institutions are related to the issue of the lack of transparency. If the promises made to the Irish people, and indeed to all European citizens, during the course of the Lisbon Treaty are to be achieved, then it will be necessary for every institution in Europe to be made more transparent and seen to be operating behind a pane of glass.

This report is a progressive step towards that goal, although more work must be done, especially on the issue of cooperating with national Ombudsmen's offices and on that of the manner in which this Parliament operates.

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS*Vice-President*

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) I, too, would like to thank the European Ombudsman for his work. If I did this now in Greek, people in this House would believe that the Greek lobby had started to cooperate with the Ombudsman, rapporteur and the speakers.

However, it is precisely in the interests of trust and transparency that it would be a good idea for us to focus on accepting the report on the Ombudsman's activities very soon, even before the Ombudsman election campaign is launched. Ombudsman, whether it is you or someone else who continues this work, I hope, in fact, we all hope, that the Ombudsman will carry out a briefing tour to more than just two regions in Europe, which will perhaps help reduce these percentage scores. We all want to make our work more transparent, which includes Parliament's work as well.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, Mr Diamandouros, as in previous years, the Ombudsman has presented a very objective report of his activities, from which can be established how important his mission is for the citizens of the European Union.

A new feature of the report for 2008 is the work of the Ombudsman with respect to the European Investment Bank. The EIB is the most important institution giving loans for investment in the EU and candidate countries. In spite of the significant autonomy enjoyed by the EIB in the institutional structure of the EU, it must comply with the standards of good administration. Therefore, it was with pleasure that I received news of the dialogue which began between the Ombudsman and the European Investment Bank in 2008, and of the signing of an understanding on compliance with the principles of good administration. In this understanding, the EIB has undertaken to establish an internal procedure for investigating complaints, which it did not have hitherto. I am also glad that the Bank has undertaken to apply the same standards in the area of good administration towards everyone who applies for a loan, both to EU citizens and those who are not EU citizens. I hope the European Parliament will be kept informed on the development of this cooperation between the Ombudsman and the EIB. Once again, I congratulate you on your report.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) The European Ombudsman has done an outstanding job. This sentiment has also been echoed by the Committee on Petitions, and I support his re-election. One of the reasons for this is that he has demonstrated openness in such a delicate matter as national minorities. On this point, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the European Union's relationship with national minorities is totally unclear.

At last, there is a mention of minorities in the Treaty of Lisbon, the 100 000 page *acquis communautaire*. However, the relationship with minorities is unclear because if, for example, a pernicious language law is accepted in Slovakia, this indicates that minority matters are not part of the Community's remit. On the other hand, new Member States are obliged, on their accession, to sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities covering minority matters. In this respect, there are two different messages being given, making the European Union two-faced. This requires clarification because 15% of Europe's citizens are indigenous or immigration minorities, which also includes 12 million Roma.

This is an extremely important and serious problem in Europe. It would be ideal if the Ombudsman, as part of his work in the future – and I do hope he continues this job – could focus a great deal of attention on this issue.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have four comments to make on this report.

The first is that the Ombudsman is an indispensable part of a democratic European Union and, most importantly, one that is close to the citizens.

My second point is that, after initial teething troubles, the collaboration between the Committee on Petitions and the Ombudsman has been excellent.

Thirdly, the Committee on Petitions and the Ombudsman, together, are the key measurement station, if you will, for a citizen-friendly Europe.

Fourthly, as a member of the Committee on Petitions, I continue to look forward to critical dialogue with the citizens of the European Union, particularly now, once the new treaty has entered into force. The European

Union is there for the citizens, not the other way round, and we must together endeavour to ensure that it stays that way and that it is improved.

Metin Kazak (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, first of all, I should like to congratulate the European Ombudsman on the record number of inquiries closed in 2008. I am sure that his new Statute will enable him to work even more effectively and to respond quickly to the citizens' complaints, by strengthening the mutual confidence between the Ombudsman and the citizens.

The Ombudsman's priority must be to prevent maladministration. I am sorry to say that we have made very little progress along these lines. Nevertheless, I hope that, with the entry into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and with the Treaty of Lisbon, this aspect will be strengthened.

The second challenge will be to continue promoting transparency within the European institutions. The third challenge, in the years to come, will be the introduction of information campaigns to ensure that our citizens are one hundred per cent aware of their rights.

Lastly, the European Network of Ombudsmen is an important platform for cooperation and for the exchange of best practices among the various countries. Bulgaria actively participates in this network. Not only has it acquired the necessary experience, it has also increased the influence of this institution in recent years.

Heidi Hautala (Verts/ALE). – (FI) Mr President, I would like to thank the Ombudsman, Mr Diamandouros, in particular, for having resolutely supported Parliament's efforts to advocate and increase transparency in decision making and, as we know, ladies and gentlemen, this work needs to be continued. It presents certain challenges. Commissioner Wallström mentioned codes of good administrative behaviour, and I would like to ask her and Mr Diamandouros whether it is not time, now that the new Commission is starting its work, to make a proposal for legislation that would apply to all the institutions and oblige them all to adhere to the principles of good governance. As far as I know, each Member State has such legislation in place.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, as a member of the Committee on Petitions, it is important to me to be able to represent the interests of the citizens even better than at present. I would like a wider public to become aware of the possibility of airing its problems in Parliament. This is particularly the case given the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Ombudsman, in any case, I wish you even greater success in the future.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, my thanks to Mrs Paliadeli for her report. The role of European Ombudsman is indeed a critical role, especially in these times when, with the Treaty of Lisbon, we are trying to create a more citizen-friendly Europe. As such, the role of the European Ombudsman is crucial and decisive. I consider that Mr Diamandouros has been efficient and consistent and has worked to promote transparency and to address issues relating to a lack thereof. Moreover, he has worked to safeguard effective means of recourse, both within the European Union and in the Member States themselves.

In general, this approach demonstrates an overall spirit of service towards citizens by the European institutions and, of course, the citizen – via this process as a whole and with the efforts which we must continue to make – feels greater confidence in all of us, in all the institutions of the European Union.

As such, and this brings me to the end, I consider that Mr Diamandouros was successful in his work and I think that today's debate and the report submitted give us very good reason to elect a new European Ombudsman for the next term of office.

Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman. – Mr President, let me begin by thanking very warmly all the Members of Parliament who have made very constructive and very positive remarks about the work of the Ombudsman. I deeply appreciate this. I also thank those that have made constructive critical remarks about the work of the Ombudsman. That is exactly what I am here for: to learn from your suggestions and your criticisms so as to be able to carry forward the work of the Ombudsman, the better to serve citizens in the future.

Let me say very briefly that the major concerns that I understand you to have expressed have to do with the need for greater transparency and, if re-elected, I will certainly try to redouble my efforts to promote transparency and good administration, for which I feel primarily responsible in the Union.

The Lisbon Treaty opens up all sorts of new possibilities, and I certainly intend to make the maximum use of the opportunities allowed me by the treaty, again in order to serve citizens better, cooperating at all times with Parliament's Committee on Petitions and with this august body.

Having said that, I would also briefly like to thank Commissioner Wallström for her work, for her comments and warm words of support, and to repeat and confirm the fact that, as the Commission comprises 66% of the Union's entire civil service, it is inevitable that most complaints will be brought against the Commission. That is certainly the case.

Let me address the issues which were brought forward by Mr Boştinaru and Mr Czarnecki on the issue of greater cooperation with national ombudsmen, particularly also beyond the EU's borders. There are two points here. I certainly have sustained contacts with all the ombudsmen from the candidate countries, who are beyond the EU borders in that sense. Beyond that, I have very close cooperation with the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, who has been designated by his institution as the point of contact for all the ombudsmen within the Council of Europe.

My own feeling is that, were I to go beyond that point, I would be entering into the area of international relations contacts, which in fact are the pre-eminent domain of the Commission, so I tried to strike a balance in that area. However, I am acutely aware of the need for greater cooperation in all areas and I try to achieve it.

On the amount of time that it takes to resolve cases, touched on by Mrs Göncz, let me just say that we have now been able to reduce the time very significantly, and on average more than 50% – about 55% – of all cases are now closed in less than a year or in about 12 months. If you bear in mind that we need to work in 23 languages, which requires a great deal of translation, I think this is not an excessive time. I am giving you an average, because the simple cases are usually resolved in about three or four months; I just wanted to clarify that point.

Let me, in her absence, thank and applaud Mrs Harkin's position of support for my position concerning greater transparency, even in what are perhaps difficult situations, if I may put it thus.

In response to Mr Vlasák's comments about the Ombudsman, I take these comments very much to heart. But let me point out that the Ombudsman should not be judged only in terms of the number of complaints or inquiries that he handles. We handle more than 11 000 requests for information in addition to complaints each year. I travel extensively throughout the Member States at all times. During my mandate, I have made more than 350 trips throughout the Union, and also have reached out to all sorts of constituencies and spoken in large numbers of areas.

So the resources that are being expended by the Ombudsman to serve citizens go far beyond merely the number of complaints that are handled, and I would like this august body to bear that in mind. I am sure that most of you do know this, but I just want to make that clarification.

Lastly allow me, since this is the last time that I will address this body during this current mandate, to express from this position my sincere thanks to all the interpreters for the work they have done for me for the past five years.

Chrysoula Paliadeli, *rapporteur*. – (EL) Mr President, my thanks to the members of this sitting for their constructive comments and kind words about my report.

The Committee on Petitions and I personally had the very special honour of drafting the report on the annual report on one of the most important institutions of the European Union, the European Ombudsman, and we came to the conclusion that the activities which Mr Nikiforos Diamandouros carried out in 2008 served the institution and the obligations which derive from it consistently, seriously and effectively.

With his impartial and objective stance towards strong institutions and bureaucratic attitudes, the European Ombudsman strengthened his standing, not only because he helped European citizens on matters of administrative negligence or inefficiency, but mainly because he strengthened their confidence in the European Union and its institutions.

We consider that, in 2008, the Ombudsman supported the institution with respect for the rules of law and with a deep social awareness, thereby setting a high standard for coming years. We trust that proper administration of the obligations and rights of this institution by the European Ombudsman over coming years will promote sound administration in the institutions of the European Union even more effectively and will foster an even more citizen-friendly attitude on the part of its institutions. We feel that this will vindicate not only the institution of the European Ombudsman and, indirectly, the institution of the ombudsmen in the Member States, but also a stronger role for the European Parliament, which controls and elects him.

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The report submitted by the European Ombudsman for 2008 is extremely balanced and comprehensive. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Nikiforos Diamandouros and his team for the work they have done.

We note, first of all, an increase in the number of complaints registered by the Ombudsman during 2008 – 3 406 complaints, compared to 3 211 in 2007. This fact can be interpreted in a positive light if we think in terms of European citizens exercising their democratic right to have access to information, but also in a negative light if we examine the content of these complaints.

The main forms of alleged maladministration featuring in the inquiries opened in 2008 were the lack of transparency, including the refusal to supply information, and the abuse of power. I find it alarming that 36% of inquiries are based on a complaint relating to a lack of transparency shown by European institutions, as European administration is a key element in building citizens' trust as part of the European project. I also believe that we must do our utmost to increase the decision-making and administrative transparency of our institutions.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) The EU is a jungle – not only in terms of its subsidies, but also in relation to its competences, its decision-making processes and even its Internet presence. In a word, for the average citizen, the EU remains a riddle wrapped up in an enigma. This very area is one that the Treaty of Lisbon could have tackled. It could have ensured greater transparency, it could have ensured a Europe made up of its cultural peoples and the historic nation states in equal partnership, diverse, federated and subsidiary in its internal design, but united and strong outwardly in order to represent European interests. There appears to be little interest in transparency, however – Council decisions and the appointment of presidents of the Commission take place behind closed doors. A common Internet presence requires the consistent use of the EU's working languages – German, English and French, with which it is possible to reach the majority of EU citizens. The current Presidency of the Council would do well to take note of this. The establishment and work of the EU Ombudsman is a step in the right direction, but there is a need for greater efforts if we want to narrow the gulf between the EU and the citizens. The most important step would be to hold referendums on subjects that point the way forward, where the results of these referendums would have to be respected. The Beneš Decrees absolutely cannot legitimise injustice. Even an ombudsman is of little help to second class citizens.

Krisztina Morvai (NI), in writing. – (HU) The European Ombudsman's report does not reflect the experiences that I have had as a human rights lawyer in Hungary. It does not mention that in autumn 2006, the police, orchestrated by the government, injured, imprisoned and subjected to sham criminal proceedings several hundred peaceful pedestrians and demonstrators commemorating a special event. The EU has remained silent. It is also saying nothing about the fact that since then, the police have been regularly, and illegally, checking the papers of those demonstrating for change, as well as recording them on video, illegally harassing them and often arbitrarily arresting them.

It is also 'thanks' to the European Union's outrageous passive stance that 16 opposition activists have been held in custody for months on suspicion of a 'terrorist act'. Their 'principal crime' is that they set up a movement for disclosing acts of corruption committed by the government. The manner in which their homes have been searched and possessions confiscated, along with the constant, blatant violation of their rights as detainees, totally contravenes European human rights norms.

For example, random, intimidating house searches have been carried out by large numbers of masked commandos, without any authorised person of trust or other guarantee. Computers have been confiscated with a complete disregard for legal guidelines and without any expert record made of the data currently stored, allowing the authorities to falsify evidence and settle scores again with political opponents. We are expecting definite intervention from the EU.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE), in writing. – (ET) Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights states that 'every person has the right to have his or her affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the institutions and bodies of the Union'. Being familiar with the European Ombudsman's performance report for 2008, today we must unfortunately still acknowledge the fact that the most frequent type of maladministration in the EU institutions that is cited in complaints is a lack of transparency (36% of all inquiries).

For me, it is indeed worrying that, although the European Parliament approved the Ombudsman's Code of Good Administrative Behaviour in 2001 with its own resolution, the other institutions of the Union have not fully followed the requests made by Parliament.

I fully support the rapporteur's proposals that maladministration should henceforth be interpreted more widely, so that in addition to illegal administrative acts and breaches of binding norms and principles, it would include incidents where administrative institutions have been negligent, acted non-transparently or broken other principles of good administration. I also personally appeal to the EU institutions and the future Ombudsman to increase the transparency of the EU's assessment processes and administrative structures, drawing up a code which will function effectively, in order to reduce maladministration in the EU.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, at the outset, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mrs Paliadeli, for a very comprehensive and clear report, and the Ombudsman and his staff for their tireless efforts at eliminating improper administration and raising standards of administration in the European Union. The European Ombudsman plays a significant role, intervening in accordance with the principle of making 'decisions as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen'. I am pleased to read the report, which shows that the Ombudsman has continued to exercise his powers in an active and balanced way, by handling complaints and maintaining constructive relations with European institutions. However, I view with concern the fact that the number of complaints rose in comparison with 2007. Fortunately, this was by only 6%, but it should be a warning to our institutions. The administration should draw a lesson from this fact, and avoid mistakes and incorrect action in future by applying the recommendations presented in the report. I endorse the rapporteur in her appeal to the institutions and authorities of the European Union to bring their practice into line with the provisions of the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour. Eight years have passed since the European Parliament adopted the resolution which approved the code. That is a very long time. Adaptation of the provisions of the code will help us achieve broader cooperation and synergy for the most effective response to the needs of our citizens.

6. Transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters in view of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A7-0045/2009) by Mr Lamassoure, on behalf of the Committee on Budgets, on transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters in view of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty [2009/2168(INI)].

Alain Lamassoure, *rapporteur*. – (FR) Mr President, first of all, I should like to take this opportunity to thank President Barroso and Commissioner Šemeta for their decision to postpone the publication of the Commission's proposals on the future budgetary policy and on the updating of the financial perspective until the next six-month term.

Admittedly, the European Council and Parliament had agreed that this update would take place in 2008-2009, but that was four years ago, which is an eternity. In the meantime, there has been the Treaty of Lisbon, the first Irish referendum, the financial crisis, the delay in the entry into force of the new treaty, and so on.

It is therefore wiser to entrust the new Commission with the task of presenting its political programme and the financial translation of that programme together in a few months' time.

On the other hand, as the Treaty of Lisbon is due to come into force on 1 December, we must waste no time in adopting the transitional measures necessary to go from one treaty to another in the budgetary field.

The Swedish Presidency has proposed that the conciliation committee of 18 November be an opportunity for the three institutions to reach a political agreement on this subject. It is therefore now a question of Parliament giving a negotiating mandate to its delegation at the conciliation committee.

Four points must be dealt with as soon as possible; none should present a serious political problem.

Firstly, the transfer procedure: abolishing the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenses requires the adoption of a single procedure, putting the two budgetary authorities on an equal footing, without compromising the flexibility that must be shown by the European Commission when managing the budget.

Secondly, the supplementary budgets: from the beginning of 2010, a first supplementary budget will be required in order to give all the institutions concerned the financial resources to exercise the new powers provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon. We therefore need a simplified procedure, inspired by the new procedure that the treaty affords the main budget itself.

Thirdly, the timetable for the preparatory meetings among the three institutions, or what we refer to as the pragmatic timetable: this is a point on which we need not do anything different from what we did before.

Fourthly – finally – the procedure for resorting to the provisional twelfths system, in the unlikely yet possible event that we fail to reach an agreement on the 2010 budget: on this point, we feel that the Treaty of Lisbon's provisions are precise enough to rule out the need for a supplement.

Your Committee on Budgets has adopted these proposals by a very large majority. I invite the House to do the same, so that we can conclude the negotiations with the Council and the Commission by the deadline set.

Algirdas Šemeta, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Lamassoure for his report.

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty will modify the rules in the budget sector, with the European Parliament and the Council as codecidors on an equal footing on all expenditures. It will imply a new legal framework which will require careful consideration between the institutions.

As our common responsibility is to ensure that the budget processes and operations run continuously and smoothly, I share the rapporteur's views that we need to agree on transitional guidelines urgently. These transitional rules are of a rather technical nature and they will only be in force until the new legal framework enters into force.

The rapporteur has identified the right issues to be discussed in his report. We will need new rules to operate transfers and new rules to adopt amending budgets. We will need a timetable that will allow an adequate involvement of all actors. We will also need to agree on clear collaboration principles and, if necessary, we will need some rules on provisional twelfths.

I can confirm here that I am ready to make the necessary suggestions in order to reach a balanced agreement. I propose that we start discussing these issues in the trialogue that we will have this afternoon. I hope the three institutions will be able to reach an agreement during the November conciliation.

Salvador Garriga Polledo, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, Lisbon is going to bring in many changes, but few will be as dramatic as those to be made to the budget procedure.

Any general rapporteur on budgets knows how the current strategy of two-round negotiation operates: clearly, covering this ground in one round is going to require additional efforts in terms of cooperation and consensus between the various institutions.

This new situation is already having an influence on the current negotiation of the budget procedure and its conciliation next week, because we know that this is the last time that it will be done in the current manner. I would like to congratulate the Committee on Budgets on the speed and flexibility with which it has put these transitional rules before us.

The next few months will be crucial for budget policy: there will be urgent transfers; there will be urgent amending budgets arriving over the next few months, to which it will be necessary to give a full response using a new procedure; and it will be necessary, among other things, to debate a budget balances amending budget using a new procedure that will require great responsibility on the part of all the institutions.

With regard to these transitional rules, my group takes the view that we will all have to make an additional effort, but the future President of the Council will, in particular, play a very important role, especially in maintaining the current 'gentlemen's agreement' in force. It is possible that the Council will be tempted to try to act so as to favour itself for very urgent budget matters, such as the European External Action Service, but, clearly, the three institutions will be on an equal footing and, on Parliament's part, what there will be is a significant sense of responsibility.

Göran Färm, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (SV) Mr President, the Treaty of Lisbon will bring big changes, not least in the area of the budget. As many people have pointed out, the most important change is that the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure areas will disappear. The European

Parliament will therefore have the power of codecision on the whole budget, and we will have a new, simplified budgetary procedure. The treaty is now ready and approved, but that does not mean that we can go over to the new procedure straight away.

For one thing, we are in full agreement about implementing this year's budget process under the old rules, as trying to change this in the middle of the reading of the budget would result in chaos. Secondly, before we can apply the new treaty in full, we need a new interinstitutional agreement. We need an updated Financial Regulation and a new, renegotiated long-term budget, the multiannual financial framework, as part of this new legislation.

This will take time. In order to be able to start work on the budget in 2010, we therefore need a number of transitional provisions. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Chairman of the Committee on Budgets, Mr Lamassoure, who took the initiative for this report very quickly and produced it in record time, while nevertheless cooperating very closely with the various groups in the committee. You have my thanks.

We have also included in the report a number of opinions on the nature of the new permanent solutions. We Social Democrats in particular have put forward a few opinions. The most important one is to ensure that Parliament's new powers are applied even during the transitional period and that the proposals that need to be tabled result in a new interinstitutional agreement in future and that a revised Financial Regulation must be viewed as a package so that we achieve a functional whole without overlaps and interpretation problems.

I hope that in today's trialogue, we will also be able to agree on the first elements of this. In conclusion, I would just like to say that the change that this will mean for the budgetary procedure is a good example of the simplification and reduction in bureaucratic procedures that the whole of the EU is in dire need of.

Anne E. Jensen, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DA) Mr President, I, too, would like to start by saying how pleased I am that we now have the Treaty of Lisbon in place, a treaty which will, of course, give Parliament more power over the budget and change the way we adopt the EU's annual budget. We are in a transitional phase, in which the budget for 2010 is being adopted under the old treaty but the implementation of the budget will be monitored and followed up under the new treaty. However we resolve this in practice, we have made a start with Mr Lamassoure's report, and I would like to thank him for taking the initiative so quickly. The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe wholeheartedly supports the report, which indicates how we are to deal with the amending budgets and transfers and other things that have already been mentioned.

The Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group has tabled a number of amendments proposing the abolition of the amending budgets and transfers. I can tell you that the ALDE Group will be voting against all of the EFD Group's proposals. We agree with Mr Lamassoure that the number of amending budgets should be reduced. However, unexpected things do happen during the course of a year and we therefore need an instrument like this. Moreover, national parliaments also have such an instrument. It is possible to make changes during the year. The increasing number of requests for money from the Globalisation Adjustment Fund in connection with the large number of dismissals alone will, of course, result in a number of amending budgets. We should not do away with the possibility of transfers between accounts, either. There are very fixed rules for how much the Commission can transfer and how it is to be done – it cannot simply be done however the Commission fancies. It must ask Parliament and the Council first.

The report also points out that the Financial Regulation and the interinstitutional agreement should now be amended, too, and I very much look forward to us receiving a proposal from the Commission soon.

Helga Trüpel, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, on behalf of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, I would like to state that we explicitly support the mandate for the chairman of the Committee on Budgets, Alain Lamassoure. We are sure that he will lead the negotiations in the transitional period in which we currently find ourselves very well and with great self-assurance. We know that, in the transition from the applicability of the Treaty of Nice to the Treaty of Lisbon – which we were all awaiting and which we need in order to make Europe more democratic and transparent – we need clear rules.

The Committee on Budgets is responsible, together with the Council and others, for producing the European budget, and we say clearly to the Council that we are going to protect and strengthen our parliamentary rights. We will not allow – and this is just as true under Mr Lamassoure's leadership in the negotiations –

these rights to be curtailed in any way, as we are absolutely sure that there must be no shift in power towards the Council.

I would like to remind you that it is absolutely necessary, when it comes to the new budgets over the next few years, for the European budget to be created jointly by the Member States and the European Parliament with a real European spirit. Only then can we make the European Union fit for the future. I would also like to remind you, in relation to financial regulations, and specifically in relation to how the money is actually dispersed to and within the Member States, that this must, of course, take place in a way that is secure against abuse. There must not be any scandals or fraud, but the financial regulations must also be made simpler and more transparent so that our European programmes do not create local nuisance, but actually reach the people. That is how we should formulate our European budgetary policy over the next few years.

Marta Andreassen, on behalf of the EFD Group. – Mr President, following the report by the honourable Member, Mrs Guy-Quint, dated April 2008, the new legal framework affecting budgetary matters should now be ready for adoption. All the institutions agreed that this would be the case so as to avoid any legal vacuum. We should therefore have no need for transitional guidelines on budgetary matters.

The report from the honourable Member, Mr Lamassoure, focuses on the approval of amending budgets and transfers, both of which constitute risky and inadequate practices that reveal a lack of professionalism as concerns the budgeting and planning process and are bound to become more risky in transitional periods.

The current number of amending budgets is excessive and does not even comply with the conditions set out in Article 37 of the Financial Regulation.

The current number of transfers is also excessive and would not occur if the planning of the budget was done with a better understanding of the needs of the different sectors in the different countries.

As a member of the Committee on Budgets, I am appalled to see almost the whole committee, except for me, approve all of these requests for transfers.

Therefore, no amending budgets or transfers should be approved during the transitional period and all efforts should be concentrated on the adoption of the legal framework so as to avoid further damage to the interests of taxpayers.

Daniël van der Stoep (NI). – (NL) Mr President, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) is sitting in the European Parliament for the first time, and is shocked by the mercenary attitude of the Members of this House. In that sense, Parliament resembles an anti-parliament. The objective seems to be to extract as much money as possible from the pockets of the hard-working citizens of Europe and, in particular, the Netherlands.

Billions are being spent on pet subjects of the left, such as the climate and development aid, whilst in the Netherlands, people are failing to receive treatment in care homes, the qualifying age for the state old-age pension (AOW) is being raised to 67 years and the police force is having to make cutbacks. Mr President, this Parliament should be there for citizens, but instead is just realising its own politically correct, extravagant schemes and those of its elitist chums.

Unfortunately, the Irish have given the loathsome Treaty of Lisbon their seal of approval, but at least they were given the choice. The PVV finds it disgraceful that this dreadful treaty has been rammed down the throats of the Dutch people. Unfortunately, however, it is a reality and, regrettably, we too shall have to learn to live with it.

The PVV cooperates constructively in this House. Yet we cannot go along with the present report. The Netherlands is the largest net contributor per citizen, and we want to see this change very soon. My request to the rapporteur is that he include in the report a statement to the effect that the European Parliament calls on the Council to put the swiftest possible end to the continuing position of the Netherlands as the largest net contributor per citizen.

If this is stated in the report, four more lights will turn to green in this Chamber during today's vote. This strikes me as a golden opportunity for the rapporteur. I should like to add that we shall be supporting all the amendments tabled by the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group.

László Surján (PPE). – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, after the First World War in Hungary, temporary huts were built in Budapest, intended to provide hospital treatment for prisoners of war returning home. These temporary huts are still in operation even today.

We want to introduce transitional procedural regulations in order to safeguard the budget process. I believe that Mr Lamassoure, the rapporteur and chairman of the committee, has mentioned and wants to see implemented principles which will last at least as long as the temporary huts in operation for 90 years I just mentioned. It is extremely important that we have paid a high price for the Treaty of Lisbon. We have given up certain principles, and the citizens of one country, the Czech Republic, will benefit less from human rights than the majority of Europeans. It is our fundamental duty to implement smoothly, seamlessly and efficiently this treaty which we have paid so dearly for. In my view, the proposals which the rapporteur is now asking for authorisation to implement serve this purpose more than adequately. This is why my group would like a significant majority in Parliament to accept them without any changes.

Finally, still on the subject of things temporary, an advert appeared a few decades ago saying that flats intended for permanent ownership had been built for Soviet officers on a temporary posting to Hungary. This means that no matter how permanent we think something is, it becomes out of date after a certain time. I hope that when these current regulations cease to be valid, better ones will replace them. With this hope, I ask everyone to support this proposal.

Eider Gardiazábal Rubial (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, as has already been said, the Treaty of Lisbon is finally going to enter into force and some of the effects of this entry into force will be felt immediately after it is signed; for example, some of the work of the Committee on Budgets must be governed by new rules starting from January. Therefore, we in the three institutions are already working to establish provisional rules to govern our work while the new regulations referred to in the treaty are debated and adopted.

We fully back the report by Mr Lamassoure. We do not believe that there is anything more to be added to its conclusions. I only hope that in the dialogue that is starting between the three institutions, consensus will prevail and that nobody will try to weight the scales in their own favour.

With your permission, I would like to make a couple of observations, because I have the impression that at times, there is a certain optimism among a section of the Committee on Budgets, and that this optimism has led us to adopt a recital affirming that the Treaty of Lisbon considerably simplifies the budget procedure.

I have just arrived in this Parliament, and clearly I had no experience in relation to the European budget but, honestly, what I have been able to read of the new budget provisions does not incline me to share this optimism. The procedure is going to be complex and, depending on the extent of agreement or, more likely, lack of agreement between Parliament and the Council, it is going to be complicated. However, we will not know this for sure until some budget procedures have been conducted under the new rules.

What we can know right away is the Council's state of mind and, on that point, the truth is that I am not too optimistic, because I can see the Council trying to corner as much power as possible in order to be able to block any decision that goes against the orthodox line. That is to say, it wants to be able to block any decision that is directed towards spending one euro more than planned, no matter what happens. If this is the case, if it wishes to retain all control, I believe that the Council is making a big mistake, because what the Council needs is to have a strong Parliament that it can work alongside.

Timo Soini (EFD). – (FI) Mr President, I support the well-argued proposals put forward by my colleague, Mrs Andreasen. In this report, you welcome the existence of the Treaty of Lisbon. That is your right, but for my part, I will say again that I am sad to see our sovereignty being crushed. You won, but we will be here and we will be on your conscience, because the way the Treaty of Lisbon was pushed through was not right. The matter of sovereignty will never die. The report mentions that several amendments to the law will need to be made so that this financial constitution – that is what it says – can be brought into effect. So you have admitted it. It is thus a constitution: financially, politically and legally. We were right and our struggle for sovereignty will continue here.

(Applause)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, there is no doubt that the Lisbon Treaty introduces far-reaching changes concerning the budget and procedures for its adoption. I will mention only the removal of the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure, which should strengthen Parliament's position, and recognition of a multiannual financial framework as a legally binding legislative act. Equally important is the simplification of the budget procedure.

While thinking of these changes, we must not, however, forget about their effective implementation, so that we can ensure the easiest possible transition to the new principles. This is especially important from the point of view of the beneficiaries of the EU budget.

We now have before us the task of identifying those areas where temporary guidelines are most needed. I would, therefore, like to express support for this report, along with all the efforts to adopt means for putting budgetary affairs in order in accordance with the new treaty.

Reimer Böge (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I very much welcome – personally, as well as in my function as the rapporteur for multiannual financial planning – the report by the chairman of our committee, Mr Lamassoure, as it builds the necessary bridges, including in terms of legal certainty, that we need until we have agreed on the necessary adaptation of the interinstitutional agreement and on further technical procedures that we need to clear up under treaty law. I want to spell out the fact that this decision also clarifies that, for us, the entire package will remain as it is for future negotiations – from the question of adapting the interinstitutional agreement to the issue of how we will interact with the future External Action Service, for example, in purely budgetary terms.

In the light of the existing agreement, I also think it is right that the relevant evaluation of the functioning of the existing interinstitutional agreement – I would say technically as well as from a budgetary policy point of view – should properly be integrated into this process of the overall package to implement the Treaty of Lisbon. This, moreover, does not just mean the issue of technicalities and procedures, but also the examination of necessary flexibilities and leeway within the budget, if we honestly intend to implement the Treaty of Lisbon in the budgetary policy sphere.

Jiří Havel (S&D). – (CS) Mr President, I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to Mr Lamassoure for the report he has written. In my opinion, this document is necessary and it was written with appropriate speed. We know that the Treaty of Lisbon will actually enter into force from December this year and we definitely need this report. I would like to respond to some of the speeches addressing the validity of the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty is now in force and it does not make sense to discuss it further. I would also like to talk about one comment made by László Surján. I would like to give my word to Mr Surján on behalf of the Czech Republic that the Czech Social Democrats will do everything possible to ensure that the exception demanded by President Klaus is withdrawn on behalf of the Czech Republic, as we consider it outrageous.

Lajos Bokros (ECR). – (HU) The European Conservatives and Reformists Group also happily endorses the transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters, but with the fairly significant addition that we too would not want the transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters to become permanent. On the other hand, we think that a transition between two different systems is necessary so that transitional procedural guidelines need to be drafted. This does not necessarily leave the process open to the danger of superfluous reallocations. In fact, we must avoid the situation in the future where reallocations are made every week and every month. This is why it must be stipulated in the permanent guidelines that such reallocations cannot be made any more than twice a year so that we can preserve the budget's unity, stability and transparency.

President. – Mr Lamassoure, this may be the first time in your life that this has happened, but the President is giving you 15 minutes' speaking time, if you so desire, to close this debate.

You may say anything you want to, I guess, or you may stick to the two minutes that are in the agenda for your closing remarks!

Alain Lamassoure, rapporteur. – (FR) Mr President, I shall not abuse this exceptional right that you are granting me.

I should like to thank all of the spokespersons from the groups that support the main proposals of the report and to assure all of the groups that we will continue, with the European Commission and with the Council, to work towards the successful conclusion of these negotiations, adopting the same team spirit. I believe that the debate has shown us that there was a very large majority in favour of these principles. Mrs Andreasen – who is no longer here – tabled a number of amendments, which we cannot go over because we are in a hurry.

I would point out that, from 1 December, there will be some new institutions within the Union: a President of the European Council, a High Representative with completely new powers, and a European External

Action Service. We will therefore have to take some extremely quick budgetary decisions if we want the new treaty to come into force on the date set.

Sadly, we have already lost too much time in obtaining an agreement among 27 countries, a ratification of the 27 parliaments, or the 27 nations, to have the Treaty of Lisbon enter into force by the end of the year, and our duty now is to ensure that the transitional provisions can be finalised and applied as quickly as possible.

I will grant Mrs Gardiazábal Rubial that the final agreement will perhaps not be founded on the simplicity that we would like and need, but we shall try in any case to ensure that it satisfies all of the institutions and that it provides the effectiveness, transparency and democratic character that the European Union sorely needs.

President. – That concludes the debate.

The vote will take place at 11.00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D), in writing. – (EL) Firstly, may I congratulate the rapporteur on his excellent work, completed in a very short space of time. The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is an important step in the unification of the European Union, in strengthening its institutions, and in deepening our European identity. At the same time, the Treaty of Lisbon introduces important changes in the procedure for approving the Community budget. Bearing in mind the idiosyncrasies of the budgetary procedure, we must secure approval of transitional guidelines during forthcoming meetings with the Council, pending approval of the legal texts provided for in the new treaty. These transitional provisions must safeguard equal treatment of the institutions – especially Parliament – in accordance with the new competences which it will acquire under the new treaty. However, in addition to securing approval of transitional provisions, our priority should be the immediate proposal and subsequent approval of the regulation which includes both the Multiannual Financial Framework of the European Union and the Financial Regulation. The European Commission's proposals for both these texts should be submitted as a package which is subject to joint negotiation with the Council.

(The sitting was suspended at 10.45 and resumed at 11.00)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

Vice-President

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

Isabelle Durant (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that, on your desks, you will find a file concerning the Lux Prize, a film prize that you are going to award.

I wish to remind you that you have an opportunity to vote. You have an obligation to vote to choose one of the three films in the competition. You have in your file a programme on the films being shown. You also have a DVD of the film that won the prize in 2007, which has been translated into 23 languages, plus another seven. The idea is that everyone can watch these films in the European Union.

I am asking you to do two things: firstly, to go and watch the films; and, secondly, to vote. It is very easy to vote: you have the procedure in your file; you can vote on the website and you can also watch the films on channel 77 on your television.

I am asking you to watch these films. They are fine works, which convey European values. You must choose one, two or three. It is up to you to give your verdict; it is important that this House votes clearly and in large numbers. I am therefore asking you to take part in this vote. This is a fine initiative. It is a citizens' initiative, which seeks to promote European values and European film makers.

It is your turn; you still have a week, next week, in which to vote. I am counting on you.

I am grateful to the Chairman of the Committee on Culture and Education, Mrs Pack, who contributed a great deal on this issue. She and I are both asking you to turn out in huge numbers and vote.

President. – I am grateful to Mrs Durant, who has given us our tasks for the weekend, which we will certainly carry out with great attention and great care.

8. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

8.1. Third country nationals subject to or exempt from a visa requirement when crossing external borders (A7-0042/2009, Tanja Fajon) (vote)

– Before the final vote:

Tanja Fajon, rapporteur. – Mr President, as announced yesterday in the debate, a political joint declaration of the European Parliament and the Council has been agreed as a commitment of the two institutions endorsed by the Commission to proceed to the completion of the process for Bosnia and Albania as soon as possible. I would now like to read the text of the declaration.

‘The European Union strongly supports the goal of the abolition of the visa regime for all the countries of the Western Balkans. The European Parliament and the Council recognise that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia fulfil all conditions for visa liberalisation. This has allowed for the adoption of the amendments to Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 in due time to allow these three countries to join the visa-free regime by 19 December 2009.

The European Parliament and the Council express the hope that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will also qualify for visa liberalisation soon. To that end, the European Parliament and the Council urge those two countries to make all efforts to comply with all the benchmarks set in the Commission’s road map.

The European Parliament and the Council invite the Commission to present a legislative proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 as soon as it has assessed that each country meets the benchmarks of the road maps with a view to achieving visa liberalisation for citizens of these countries as soon as possible.

The European Parliament and the Council will examine a proposal for amending the Regulation concerning Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a matter of urgency.’

Algirdas Šemeta, Member of the Commission. – The Commission welcomes the positive reception of this legislative proposal by Parliament in the plenary yesterday. The adoption of this proposal will have a tangible impact on citizens in the countries concerned.

As was said yesterday, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania will not be forgotten. The Commission will make proposals for the lifting of the visa requirements in these countries as soon as possible in 2010, once they have fulfilled the necessary preconditions of the roadmap.

In this respect, the Commission supports the joint declaration of the Council and Parliament.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE). – Mr President, I would just like to say that it is regrettable that the Swedish Presidency could not be represented here today at the appropriate ministerial level, because it has not been invited.

The Swedish Presidency negotiated the joint declaration, which is the main political success in the field of visa liberalisation. We owe this to the Presidency, but do not even have the possibility to say thank you. I would like to put on the record the fact that the Council Presidency is not here not because it does not want to be, but because it has not been afforded a welcome.

President. – Mrs Corazza Bildt, I fully understand what you are saying. However, I wish to make it clear that the Council can take part in our meetings at any time. Thus, it has a right to be here; it does not need to be invited.

8.2. Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and list of activities by policy section (vote)

8.3. EU - Russia Summit on 18 November 2009 in Stockholm (vote)

- Before the vote on Amendment 9

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to table the following amendment, which was formulated in consultation with the author of the motion. I will read the text out in English.

‘Condemns the brutal assassination of Maksharip Aushev, a popular human rights activist and an opposition figure who was shot dead in Ingushetia;’. Then we would have a deletion, but it would continue as follows: ‘calls in particular on the Russian authorities to adopt preventive protective measures as regards human rights defenders, such as starting an investigation as soon as threats faced by them are known by the prosecutor and the judicial system;’.

This would have a clear message, and therefore I would like to support that kind of amendment, together with the Green Group, which has put the amendment to the vote.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

- Before the vote on recital E

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE). – Mr President, as the withdrawal of Russia’s signature from the Energy Charter Treaty is not a single event but a method used several times now, it would be worth inserting a note to the effect that the latest withdrawal ‘undermines the reliability of that country’s signature in general’.

In striving for new signatures, we should ask our honourable partner to be more serious in the future.

(The oral amendment was not accepted)

- Before the vote on recital H

Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE). – Mr President, there is a mistake in recital H, either through a drafting error or an omission, because it mentions the recent conflict ‘between Georgia and its breakaway regions’, in spite of the true picture. A word is missing there.

According to the report of the fact-finding mission, it was a war or military conflict in Georgia between Russia and Georgia, where some additional units of Russia’s allies and mercenaries from the north Caucasus were involved as well. So, in a resolution that is not looking to be naive or biased, we should make the following addition: ‘between Russia and Georgia and its breakaway regions’.

Nobody really thinks that the army of South Ossetia was bombing Gori and approaching Tbilisi. That is why President Sarkozy flew to meet President Medvedev and not President Kokoity.

Let us fill that accidental gap with a clear mind.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

8.4. Joint Programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases (vote)

8.5. The European Ombudsman’s activities (2008) (A7-0020/2009, Chrysoula Paliadeli) (vote)

8.6. Transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters in view of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (A7-0045/2009, Alain Lamassoure) (vote)

9. Explanations of vote

- Oral explanations of vote:

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, I should like to explain my vote on the visa rights of citizens of the Western Balkans. The unwavering view of the left wing is that everyone has the right to move and travel freely; therefore, every citizen should have the right to travel to and enter the European Union.

Whereas, therefore, I agree that visa restrictions should be lifted for citizens of the Western Balkans, I voted against the resolution because the way in which it raises the issue and refers to Kosovo essentially constitutes *de facto* confirmation of its unilateral recognition as an independent state.

In my opinion, this is in breach of the UN founding charter and Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). This is a practice which slips in a direction which does not promote the peaceful resolution of differences, security or stability in the area.

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, with regard to the Fajon report, on behalf of the Spanish delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), I would like to point out that, although we voted for the report, we do not agree with recital 2a, added by Amendment 4, which states that the Commission 'should start a visa dialogue with Kosovo with a view to establishing a roadmap for visa facilitation and liberalisation similar to those established with Western Balkan countries'.

In my delegation's view, Kosovo cannot be put on the same footing as the Western Balkan countries. I would point out that Kosovo has not been recognised by the Spanish authorities or by any other Member States.

Since the amendment I have mentioned was voted on in block voting with many other amendments, we were not able to vote against it, but we would like it placed on the record that we are not in agreement with its content.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE). – Mr President, I just wanted to say that we should stress that the joint declaration is really a great success. It is in the joint declaration that we carry the strong political message in support of speeding up the granting of free visas to all the people of the Western Balkans. It is thanks to the responsible position of the PPE Group, which brought the process back on track and in the right direction on a sound legal basis according to the Treaties, that we could achieve such a political success. Forcing into a legal annex a political statement was just misleading and sent the wrong message, raising false expectations for the people in the region.

I would just like to say that I lived through the siege and the shelling of Sarajevo for one and a half years. I will be committed to the speeding up of the granting of visas for my friends and people there until we get it next summer.

Jörg Leichtfried (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to talk about Mrs Paliadeli's report, specifically because I believe that the European Ombudsman must actually represent the citizens of the European Union. Over the last year, the Ombudsman has undertaken something that completely contradicts this remit as he has prostrated himself before economic interests and has allowed himself to be used by them. He has put a question to the Commission in which he complains that several States have declared prohibitions on wild animals in circuses. For me, that is not the Ombudsman's concern. It is not the Ombudsman's job to protect a small number of circus owners who still work with wild animals and to fail to side with the great majority of people, who very likely support this prohibition on wild animals and are quite happy with circuses without wild animals.

I therefore do not see his activity in this case as a positive and I have therefore voted against this report.

10. Welcome

President. – It is my pleasure to welcome a delegation of political representatives and other visitors from the Canadian Parliament and from the Canadian Mission to the European Union, who are seated in the official gallery. The members of the delegation are in Brussels to meet their counterparts in the European Parliament, on the occasion of the 32nd interparliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and Canada.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, they had a chance to talk with many of our Members and, yesterday, they visited the city of Ypres for the Armistice Day commemoration. I wish the delegation a continued enjoyable stay in the European Union.

11. Explanations of vote (continuation)

- *Oral explanation of vote:*

Krisztina Morvai (NI), – (HU) The European Ombudsman's report does not reflect the experiences that I have had as a human rights lawyer in Hungary. It does not mention that in autumn 2006, the police, orchestrated by the government, injured, imprisoned and subjected to sham criminal proceedings several hundred peaceful pedestrians and demonstrators commemorating a special event. The EU has remained silent. It is also saying nothing about the fact that since then, the police have been regularly, and illegally, checking the papers of those demonstrating for change, as well as recording them on video, illegally harassing them and often arbitrarily arresting them.

It is also 'thanks' to the European Union's outrageous passive stance that 16 opposition activists have currently been held in custody for months on suspicion of a 'terrorist act'. Their 'principal crime' is that they set up a movement for disclosing acts of corruption committed by the government. The manner in which their homes have been searched and possessions confiscated, along with the constant, blatant violation of their rights as detainees, totally contravenes European human rights norms.

For example, random, intimidating house searches have been carried out by large numbers of masked commandos, without any authorised person of trust or other guarantee. Computers have been confiscated with a complete disregard for legal guidelines and without any expert record made of the data currently stored, allowing the authorities to falsify evidence and settle scores again with political opponents. We are expecting definite intervention from the EU. I voted against.

Written explanations of vote:

- **Report: Tanja Fajon (A7-0042/2009)**

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) Integration is a splendid measure for preserving peace and that measure can be used for the countries of the Western Balkans. It is important to move forward, to create more favourable conditions to simplify the visa regime. The countries have an opportunity to develop closer ties with neighbouring countries and with the European Union. The liberalisation of the visa regime is based on a regional strategy and European perspective without discriminating against all of the countries of the Western Balkans. The same criteria that were set out in the visa regime liberalisation action plans should be applied to all the countries concerned. There remains the unsolved question of Kosovo and Albania. When will the citizens of these countries be able to take advantage of the visa free regime? I agree that an action plan should be drafted and that urgent talks should begin as soon as possible. Albania and Bosnia have to catch up with Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The visa requirements should be abolished immediately, as soon as Albania and Bosnia meet all the necessary requirements.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Union's strategy towards the region of the former Yugoslavia was set out some five years ago in the Thessaloniki agenda. It safeguarded a European perspective for the peoples of the Western Balkans, and provided for the issue of liberalising visa requirements. The Slovenian Presidency decided to begin negotiations in 2008.

Five Western Balkan countries are negotiating this liberalisation but, according to the Commission report, even though they have all made considerable progress, only three of them (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) meet the conditions for this liberalisation to take place soon, whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania are not yet considered ready. I agree that we cannot set precedents by lowering the agreed criteria. We are ready to welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania once they are ready to meet the conditions that have been set.

Cornelia Ernst (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (DE) I generally believe that exemptions from and relaxation of visa rules are positive moves for the coexistence of peoples and for improving cooperation between countries. For the Western Balkans, in particular, it is important that all the countries of the region should be granted such a prospect. I therefore very much welcome the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania are to be included in these regulations. Visa exemption for some must not be to the detriment of other citizens of the Western Balkans, however. That would be the case if only Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were able to enjoy exemption from the visa requirement while Bosnian Muslims were not. I also argue in favour of medium-term solutions for Kosovo. In so doing, I would point out that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia

and does not have any status under international law. That does not relieve us of the obligation to consider how this state and its citizens are to be dealt with in future, however.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The visa regime recommended here, which we voted against, is a major step backwards for these countries of the former Yugoslavia. Under socialism, their citizens were able to travel to the countries now in the European Union without a visa, but they are now required to have one.

Moreover, this regime is full of contradictions. Although it provides for the facilitation of visas, it still requires a series of unjustified procedures and demands that biometric data be included in passports, seriously jeopardising the right to privacy and personal data protection, and infringing the rights of these countries' citizens.

At the same time, the unacceptable agreements for the repatriation of persons resident without authorisation are maintained. Countries have to sign these agreements to be able to access the visa facilitation system. In addition to infringing the rights of immigrants in such situations, this amounts to unacceptable pressure and blackmail on these countries.

The report also includes dialogue with Kosovo regarding its inclusion in this process. That implicitly constitutes recognition and violates international law and Serbia's sovereignty over this territory.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) Europe's policy of systematically liberalising visas is an ideological attempt to destroy the European Union's external borders, after having first demolished its internal borders. This gives rise to all too familiar consequences: an explosion in migratory flows and cross-border traffic, without even mentioning the extraordinary opportunities offered to terrorists of all persuasions.

It is an aberration to want to include countries such as Albania and Bosnia 'in advance', so to speak, in the list of countries whose citizens are exempted from the visa requirement. And it is more unacceptable still to demand that Kosovo be included in it! Why not include all of the countries of the world, in the name of the free movement of persons worldwide, and regardless of the most basic security measures that those in power nonetheless owe their nations!

Moreover, does anyone need reminding of the conditions of Kosovo's so-called independence, by a unilateral declaration? Does anyone need reminding that this independence is not even recognised by all of the countries of the European Union? Lastly, does anyone need reminding of the tragic fate of the Kosovo Serbs, persecuted on the now colonised land of their ancestors?

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Fajon report on the liberalisation of visas for the Western Balkans because it is the European Parliament's responsibility to send out a strong message to all of the countries of the Western Balkans that says that we support them in their efforts to meet the criteria laid down by the European Commission in relation to the liberalisation of the visa policy. These criteria have already been met in the case of Serbia and Montenegro, but it has not yet been possible to give the green light to Albania and Bosnia.

Many young people in these countries feel how young East Germans, on the other side of the Wall, used to feel. However, it is hard to believe today that, just a stone's throw from Slovenia, young people cannot get to know Europe or conceive of a future within the EU. Almost 90% of the criteria laid down by the Commission have thus been met by Bosnia. We must press ahead because the political situation could worsen if a strong message is not sent out. Lastly, a solution really will have to be found with regard to the situation of Kosovo, the only part of the Balkans excluded from this process.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – Moves to liberalise visa requirements for citizens of the Balkan States are to be welcomed. As the stabilisation and association processes develop with these countries and they move from potential candidate status to full candidate status, it seems appropriate that their citizens should enjoy greater freedom of movement. I fully back the amendment tabled on behalf of my own group. This House has previously called on all EU Member States to recognise Kosovo's independence and Serbia should implement the same measures and controls on its Kosovan border as it does on other internationally recognised borders.

Isabella Lövin (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (SV) I am, of course, in favour of facilitating travel for citizens of third countries who want to travel to the EU, including citizens of the Balkan States, and I would therefore have liked to have supported this report. Unfortunately, a number of amendments requiring biometric data

to be included in passports were adopted. This may result in both a lack of legal certainty and an invasion of privacy and I therefore abstained in the final vote.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) We refuse to validate the visa waiver requested for Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are rejecting this report because we do not accept having the *de facto* recognition of Kosovo as a state imposed on us.

Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Bulgaria are fiercely opposed to this. Thus, there is still no EU common position on this subject. However, the starting up of visa liberalisation negotiations with Kosovo, as requested in the report, presupposes the recognition of the creation of the state of Kosovo. This goes completely against respect for international law.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Although I voted in favour of this report, I believe this process needs to be monitored carefully. The introduction of visa waivers for citizens of these countries requires us to be clear about the circumstances in which it is done. In particular, we must bear in mind the need to combat illegal immigration, people trafficking and organised crime.

For all these reasons, I believe the caution shown by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) towards Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina is fully justified, and I repeat that the countries granted the possibility of visa waiver should be kept under careful observation. The security of Europe's borders has to be a concern of European policy; otherwise, if we facilitate entry, we may show that we are unable to keep and enforce the rules within the EU.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I am not opposed to the liberalisation of visas for the Western Balkan countries. However, I voted against the Fajon report because it is unacceptable to think about the liberalisation of visas with Kosovo while we do not recognise its independence. In terms of international law, Kosovo's independence is an illegal act; therefore, the EU cannot negotiate the liberalisation of visas or any other aspect with a territory that is illegally independent. Voting for the Fajon report means indirectly recognising the independence of Kosovo, and that is not acceptable. In addition, under no circumstances can we accept requirements for biometric data for the issue of visas.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Abolishing the visa requirement for Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia is very much to be welcomed, as the Commission's recommendation follows careful evaluation and the meeting of requirements set. The inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, however, is something to be rejected. There is a danger that including these countries would open the floodgates to organised criminality, human trafficking and immigration. Kosovo is currently only able to sustain its government with massive EU aid and, for that reason, visa waiver negotiations are pointless at this time. We need to better communicate the basis of these decisions, whilst also making clear to Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina that they still need to make major efforts in order to be ready to join the European club.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Conditions for, and the possibilities of, relaxing visa requirements have been discussed for five Western Balkan States – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. According to the Commission proposal, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have met the majority of targets and are therefore now to have their requirement for a visa removed. The report we are debating also makes reference to the progress made in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to a corresponding move for those countries to the positive list of visa-free states in the near future. Given the potential for illegal migration from these countries, as well as alarming radical Islamic tendencies, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, I am voting against the adoption of this report. Moreover, my home country, Austria, would be particularly affected, given its geographical proximity to the Western Balkans. The visa requirement for the states in question represents a certain check on unwanted immigration and should therefore be retained for the time being.

Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (SV) I am, of course, in favour of facilitating travel for citizens of third countries who want to travel to the EU. This includes citizens of the Balkan States and I would therefore have liked to have supported this report. Unfortunately, a number of amendments requiring biometric data to be included in passports were adopted. This is something that I have always been opposed to, as it constitutes an invasion of privacy and also results in a lack of legal certainty. I therefore abstained in the final vote.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) Being in favour of the abolition of short-stay visas, I voted for Mrs Fajon's report, as it is a step in the right direction. Thanks to this measure, the majority of the nationals of the countries concerned will no longer be subject to the administrative formalities required for embassies to issue visas.

Nevertheless, I regret that this exemption applies only to holders of biometric passports, since I believe that this is incompatible with the protection of personal data and privacy.

I am also shocked that only two of the three communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbs and the Croats, will benefit from this measure, and that the residents of Kosovo will be excluded from it.

The status of European citizens must not be used to settle the issue of the status of the Member States and even less so to revive tensions within them that are already strong.

In the Balkans, all European Union nationals and citizens must be treated on an equal footing. The free movement of persons must be a fundamental right in Europe.

- Motion for a resolution: Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and list of activities by policy section

Regina Bastos (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The purpose of the Commission proposal is to create a new European Microfinance Facility for Employment, which will give unemployed people the chance to make a fresh start and will pave the way for some of the most disadvantaged groups in Europe, including young people, to start their own businesses. This facility will extend the range of financial support aimed specifically at new entrepreneurs in the current context of tighter credit. I cannot, however, agree with the Commission's proposal to reallocate part of the budget (EUR 100 million) from Progress – a Community Programme For Employment And Social Solidarity – to the European Microfinance Facility. Reallocating sums from Progress would send out the wrong signal, since Progress targets the most vulnerable social groups. The European Microfinance Facility needs to have a separate budget line.

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – Due to the fact that Parliament has yet to conclude its examination of the microfinance facility, it is not yet clear whether the funds that should be made available to this facility might originate from Progress. For this reason it is crucial that the Commission refrains from allocating funds currently found within Progress. I have therefore voted in favour of this resolution.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – I voted for this resolution opposing the draft proposed by the Commission for the Progress annual plan of work for 2010 because the Commission has clearly overstepped its power. It has attempted to reallocate budgetary resources from the Progress programme to the microfinance facility before the European Parliament has reached a decision. The Commission must respect Parliament's prerogative and wait until all three institutions, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, have reached agreement on the microfinance facility before submitting a draft Progress annual plan of work.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We voted in favour of this resolution, since we agree with the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in its opposition to the European Commission's position, which is to take money away from Progress so as to include it in the funding of a microcredit programme. If the Commission wants to set up a microcredit scheme, it should do so with new resources and not at the expense of Progress.

In any case, the European Parliament has not yet completed its examination of the Commission's proposals on the microfinance facility, and therefore the Commission should refrain from adopting specific measures regarding the funding of the Progress programme until the legislative procedure on the microfinance facility has been concluded.

That is why there is clear opposition to adopting the Commission's draft decision regarding the Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and list of activities by policy section.

We also believe the correct thing for the Commission to do is to withdraw the draft decision regarding the Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and list of activities by policy section, and to submit a new proposal.

Livia Járóka (PPE), in writing. – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, in the current global economic downturn, simple financial instruments that are able to fund businesses, especially in underdeveloped regions or for such social groups, assume particular importance. The microcredit system operating in numerous countries and on several continents has also proved that with the provision of appropriate training and monitoring, this system can offer assistance to the most vulnerable groups who are forced to face grave difficulties on the labour

market. The Progress Microfinance Facility proposed by the European Commission is an extremely important initiative which may be able to fulfil this role in reintegrating those groups affected by social exclusion. However, until the codecision process between the Commission and the European Parliament is up and running and the budget for the microfinance facility is completely clear, it would be a sensible idea for the European Commission to withdraw its proposal concerning the Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and not present the legislators with a *fait accompli*. This means that once the codecision process is over, the European Parliament could make a free, responsible decision on this vital issue.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on a draft Commission decision regarding the Progress Microfinance Facility as I see it as absolutely necessary to conclude the legislative process before taking further steps. In terms of the content, it goes without saying that I support the idea of establishing a microfinance facility.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), *in writing*. – I took the decision to support this motion for a resolution as I oppose the suggestion made by the Commission to reduce the financial envelope of the Programme for Employment and Social solidarity – Progress, by EUR 100 million and to reallocate this money to the European Microfinance Facility for Employment and Social Inclusion. The Progress programme has now been running for three years and the overall impact has been positive. I welcome the proposal establishing the microfinance facility as I believe it will help offer a new start for some of Europe's most disadvantaged groups by increasing the supply and accessibility of microloans and, in turn, helping people start up their own businesses. However, I do not think that the Progress programme should be jeopardised by the reallocation of funds to the microfinance facility. I would like to see the full implementation of both programmes and it is for this reason I voted in favour of this motion.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution on the Progress annual plan of work for 2010 and list of activities by policy section. I believe that it is important for Parliament, the Council and Commission, first of all, to reach an agreement on the proposal to set up Progress, a European Microfinance Facility for employment and social solidarity, as well as on the proposal to amend the Progress Community Programme. According to these, EUR 100 million should be reallocated to finance Progress, the new European Microfinance Facility supporting employment and social solidarity in order to implement the 'shared commitment for employment' mentioned in Commission communication COM(2009)257. I feel that the sum of EUR 100 million is not sufficient to achieve the objectives being proposed. This is why I voted in favour of the Commission withdrawing the draft decision on the annual plan of work for 2010 as part of the Progress Programme and list of activities by policy section and the future Commission resubmitting a new proposal, after the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force and the European Parliament, Council and Commission have reached an agreement on the proposal submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2009)0333) and on the amended proposal (COM(2009)0340).

- Motion for a resolution: EU-Russia Summit on 18 November 2009 in Stockholm

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the European Union's efforts to strengthen its relations with Russia, thus contributing to greater stability, security and prosperity for Europe. One of the most crucial areas of cooperation in EU-Russia relations is specifically that of energy and energy security. It is essential to create the stability needed to guarantee the security of supplies to EU Member States and their consumers.

I hope the energy dialogue and the commitments resulting from the forthcoming EU-Russia Summit will, in the long term, lead to greater transparency and viability for the energy sector, and that this sector, in turn, can help to establish new structural relations between the two blocs through the development of commercial and economic cooperation. Equally important is cooperation between the EU and Russia on climate change, so as to secure a global agreement at the Copenhagen conference. I would emphasise the strategic nature of EU-Russia relations and their contribution to the process of mutual understanding and trust, which is essential for establishing peace and stability across the continent of Europe.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – An EU-Russia Summit will take place on 18 November 2009. In recent years, the European Union and Russia have developed a strong relationship. There are, however, certain areas that require reinforcement. I am of the opinion that the resolution in question tackles these areas well and have therefore voted in favour of this resolution.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution since I believe that this summit is particularly important, coming as it does just before the Copenhagen climate change conference, and it may be an excellent opportunity to strengthen EU-Russia relations. This partnership can play a decisive role on the world stage, given the effects of the economic and financial crisis, the preparations for Copenhagen, and the signing of a future agreement to set up an early warning system to ensure greater energy security between the EU and Russia, thus promoting further cooperation in this field.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) At a time when reunified Europe is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, EU-Russia relations take on particular importance and deserve careful consideration.

It is clear today that the wave of optimism about freedom and democracy that came after the fall of the Iron Curtain has suffered a number of setbacks, and that Russia is far from being the democracy governed by the rule of law that was foreseen back then and which everyone still desires. It is therefore only natural that people are disenchanted with the slow pace of change.

Having said that, I must strongly condemn the revisionist efforts by the European left to gloss over the heinous crimes of Communism and to invent perfect worlds in the past, offending the memory of those who fought to free people from Soviet totalitarianism.

This summit is an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its relations with Russia and to do so in a consistent manner that is productive for both parties, without neglecting the firmness and caution required on issues such as energy, defence, democracy and human rights.

The award of the Sakharov prize to Memorial shows how much remains to be done and demonstrates the close attention that this House devotes to Russia. I hope the other European institutions will follow its example.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution on Russia. Russia is one of the EU's most important partners and it is essential that the EU and Russia have a strong working relationship. The forthcoming summit in Stockholm will discuss a range of issues important to the EU, Russia and, indeed, the wider global community, and Parliament has today sent a united message highlighting the areas of key interest and concern.

Jean-Marie Le Pen (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Russia is, without question, the only country in the world that never finds favour with you and whose demands, needs and sensitivity you systematically hide. It is true that, for nearly 50 years, the Soviets had half of Europe under their yoke, the tanks bloodily repressed the aspirations for freedom, in Budapest in 1956, in Prague in 1968, in Poland ...

At the time, however, your disapproval was so much more discreet – when it existed! Even when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, how many European leaders were hoping and praying for communism simply to be reformed and for the status quo to remain? As if the bloodiest dictatorship of the 20th century and its 150 million deaths could be reformed!

Russia, however, is not the USSR. It is a great country with which we must establish privileged relations, because we have common interests and mutual benefits to derive from such relations, but, above all, because Russia, unlike Turkey, unquestionably forms part of Europe's geography, culture, spirit and civilisation.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The forthcoming EU-Russia Summit is taking place 20 years after the fall of the Berlin wall. The symbolism of the occasion reminds us of two fundamental ideas that must be kept at the forefront.

Firstly, the values of freedom, respect for fundamental rights, democracy, peace and the sovereignty of states remain fully valid and guide the European Union in its internal and external policies, and they should also guide a country like Russia, whose role in international society is, and should be, fundamental. I am concerned to have to point out, however, that Russia has not shown itself to be an actor guided by these values.

The last 20 years also serve to remind us that Europe's relations with Russia are now different, since they are based on dialogue. Russia is not an ally of Europe with whom we share values; it is a neighbour with whom we share a geographical area, divergences and common interests, such as the situation in Afghanistan. This realism should be the starting point for us to draw up a new cooperation agreement in future. The fall of Communism does not mean the end of differences but, in these relations, it does mean the end of confrontation.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (ES) The EU and Russia have a major responsibility regarding the stability, security and prosperity of Europe as a whole.

One of the purposes of cooperation between the EU and Russia within the Quartet ought to be to put pressure on Israel to abide by the agreements, to halt the construction of settlements and to resume negotiations to find a swift solution for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. In our view, external relations ought to be based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, and not on creating spheres of influence.

We welcome the continuing exchange of points of view on human rights in Russia. However, we take note of the concerns expressed by Russia regarding infringements of human rights in the EU, especially with regard to Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic States.

I abstained from the vote on this resolution because the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left is opposed to any initiative that might lead to a new arms race. We are opposed to the US plans to install a missile shield on EU Member State territory. We also reject any form of USA-Russia-EU-NATO collaboration in constructing a missile defence system.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) Although the joint motion for a resolution on the EU-Russia Summit makes reference to our important mutual ties and common interests, in certain points, it represents an unacceptable meddling in internal affairs. The motion seeks to forbid Russia from negotiating with individual EU Member States about energy projects. The EU's one-sided view of the conflict in Georgia, where the Union is clearly behind Georgia, is contrary to the EU's role as a fair and independent observer. The overall tone of this motion would not help to improve relations with this important country for Europe. I therefore voted against this motion for a resolution.

Franz Obermayr (NI), in writing. – (DE) There are certainly deficits in terms of democracy and the rule of law in Russia. Nonetheless, I do not believe that we should be engaging in self-righteous meddling in the internal policy affairs of other States, all the more so given that the EU is by no means in a position to assume the role of a model of democracy. Our one-sided view of the conflict in Georgia, too, is, I think, a mistake. In the light of these considerations I voted against the motion for a resolution on the EU-Russia Summit.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) I endorsed the resolution on the EU-Russia Summit, because the forthcoming summit between the European Union and Russia in Stockholm is an opportunity to think through the most important problems of that strategic cooperation. Developing an effective formula for dialogue with the Russian Federation requires a uniform and united policy from the Member States of the European Union. We must remember that a condition of bringing such a concept into reality has to be that we rise above the interests of particular Member States. The idea of a uniform and united policy takes on special significance in the context of the security of European energy policy. In this matter, the common interest of the European Union must stand above efforts to look after private interests in relations with Russia.

A further, important matter for relations between the European Union and Russia is the question of the Eastern Partnership. Russia should understand that this project is not directed against Russia. Developing a strategy to ensure stabilisation and development in the region is advantageous both for the countries of the EU and for Russia. An important challenge for bilateral relations is also the criteria for evaluation of the problem of the observance of human rights and the principles of the rule of law in Russia. The countries of the EU should ask themselves if, in a strictly European sense, it is possible to recognise some of Russia's actions as fully democratic.

Peter Skinner (S&D), in writing. – Relations between the EU and Russia are clearly more than just about trade. The human rights record within Russia is of the utmost concern to many citizens across the EU. Poverty and crime are still continuous reminders of an often weak economic situation for many in Russia, particularly the elderly.

For those who seek democratic reforms, it is also clear that such courage/dissent is met with harassment and sometimes extreme violence. Journalists and internationally respected human rights activists need to be given the strongest rights and protections of any democratic system. The assassination of Maksharip Aushev highlights the brutality that unfortunately meets protest.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE), in writing. – (PL) Negotiations, which began last year, are currently underway with Russia. These negotiations concern a new EU-Russia treaty, and take account of the current Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part,

and the Russian Federation, of the other part. Parliament has always stressed the significance of questions such as human rights, energy security and minority rights, and so this time too, these matters cannot fail to be raised at the summit. Good relations with Russia are very important to the European Union, because it is an important and valuable partner in European relations, but under no circumstances can it be allowed that the EU should not raise questions which are uncomfortable for the Russian Federation. Particularly worthy of note is Amendment 3 to the EU-Russia Summit in the Stockholm resolution, adopted by the European Parliament, which adds a new Paragraph 9a to the resolution: 'Stresses that developing infrastructure links between the EU and the Russian Federation is mutually beneficial and therefore should be encouraged and based on minimising economic and environmental costs; strongly encourages Russia to adhere, in energy cooperation projects with the EU, to the fundamental principles formulated in the Energy Charter'.

Only a united stance of all Member States, including a united position of the Council, Parliament and the Commission, can give final form to the new framework agreement on cooperation between the EU and Russia.

- Motion for a resolution: Joint Programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative diseases affect an incredible number of European Union citizens. At present, there is little information on how these diseases may be prevented and treated. Due to the seriousness of these diseases, it is crucial that more is done at EU level in order to tackle these issues. It is for this reason that I have voted in favour of this report.

Nessa Childers (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution because of the importance of tackling Alzheimer's disease in Europe. As a member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, I am used to investing time and effort in an issue now in order to benefit future generations. As Europe's population becomes older, Alzheimer's disease is set to become more prevalent across the EU. As such, it is crucial that the European Parliament tackle this problem now to try and offset some of the damage that this rise in Alzheimer's will cause.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on joint programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, because I believe it is necessary to strengthen measures to promote research into these diseases, in particular, Alzheimer's disease, at European level. Since 7.3 million people suffer from Alzheimer's or allied diseases (a number that it is estimated will double by 2020), the promotion of prevention and early diagnosis and treatment for neurodegenerative diseases is particularly important.

I believe that Article 182(5) of the Treaty of Lisbon, which lays down the codecision procedure for implementing the European research area, could provide a more appropriate legal basis for future joint programming initiatives in the field of research through greater involvement of the European Parliament.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We voted in favour of this motion for a resolution, since we are aware that neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, affect more than seven million people living in the countries of the European Union.

We join in welcoming the Commission's proposed pilot project for joint programming of research in this field, although we do not regard it as enough. We do, however, acknowledge its value in reducing fragmentation of the research effort, leading as it would to a pooling of a critical mass of skills, knowledge and financial resources.

It is important to make further progress, particularly through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing social research into the welfare of patients and their families, and by promoting 'brain-healthy lifestyles' and considerable improvements in the living conditions and state of health of the population in general.

We are aware that neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's are among the greatest challenges in mental health, and the fight against these diseases must therefore respond to a triple challenge: providing care for an increasing number of patients on a day-to-day basis, improving the conditions under which much of this care is provided, which means providing greater support for families and carers, and securing much more funding for research, so that the number of patients decreases.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease are a major factor in long-term disability. They affect more than seven million Europeans, a figure that will probably double in the coming decades as a result of our ageing population.

That is why I support the Europe-wide implementation of any system that will enable us to do more to treat the effects of neurodegenerative diseases, in particular, of Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, both at a social level and at a public health level. Indeed, there is currently no treatment to cure neurodegenerative diseases, and yet this is one of Europe's biggest challenges in the mental health field, which we must tackle with the resources most suitable for the job.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I wholeheartedly support the resolution on neurodegenerative diseases and welcome the EU's proposed coordination in this area. Dementia is a huge issue throughout Europe affecting millions of individuals and families. There are an estimated seven million people across the EU with dementia, some 70 000 in Scotland – and these figures are expected to rise in the future. The Commission has expressly recognised Scotland as one of a handful of countries to have already embarked upon a national dementia strategy. The work already undertaken in Scotland will fit nicely into the proposals of the EU and together, we will be more able to better understand and help prevent Alzheimer's and other degenerative conditions.

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the joint programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's, because I feel it is important to speed up the joint research work carried out by the Member States in relation to neurodegenerative diseases. It should not be forgotten that around 7.3 million people in Europe suffer from Alzheimer's disease or from a similar disease; this figure is expected to double by 2020. Unfortunately, no cure exists at the moment, and prevention- and treatment-related knowledge is limited. That is why I recommend that the Member States pool their resources and their efforts in order to further the research together, since by working together as Europeans, we will be in a stronger position to combat these diseases. Moreover, I call on the European ministers for research to adopt a similar position on 3 December. I should also like to point out that MEPs, now more than ever, want to be involved in future initiatives concerning the joint programming of research, through the legislative procedure laid down by the Treaty of Lisbon for research, namely codecision.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Around 7 million people in Europe suffer from neurodegenerative diseases. Given Europe's increasingly aged population, this figure is likely to double over the next few decades. What is more, it is a sad truth that, in the field of neurodegenerative conditions, at present the available treatment methods only slow down the progress of the illness, rather than aiming to prevent or actually cure the illness. Dementia and related conditions, and in particular Alzheimer's disease, give rise to enormous health care expenditure: the annual costs for dementia patients are estimated to amount to around EUR 21 000. Additional costs also arise as a result of the associated problems for these conditions, as patients tend not to get additional physical complaints looked at and often have a self-denying reaction to medical treatment. Europe is facing a major health policy challenge here, where the exchange of knowledge and best practice in procedures and methods as part of a common, pan-European research framework is certainly a worthwhile approach. I therefore support the motion for a resolution.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) A genuine public health problem, neurodegenerative diseases and, in particular, Alzheimer's disease, represent the main diseases for which people over 65 years old require substantial clinical care. Alzheimer's is a disease that will inevitably become more common with the expected ageing of the European population: seven million Europeans are affected today, and that figure will probably double in the coming decades.

This is why concerted action at EU level is important. This is why the European Parliament is acting as the citizens' sounding board when it calls for coordinated research efforts in this field via the resolution adopted today. Clearly, priority must be given to a multidisciplinary approach incorporating diagnosis, prevention, treatment and support for patients and their families.

Equally, we must respond to the appeal by researchers to have more volunteers for clinical trials if we want to help ensure that effective medicines for treating cognitive disorders are placed on the market. In this regard, a huge information campaign targeted at families must be carried out.

Another challenge in terms of providing better support for patients and, above all, of delaying the onset of their symptoms is to vary their intellectual activities and to keep their minds active every day.

- Report: Chrysoula Paliadeli (A7-0020/2009)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that citizens, companies, non-governmental organisations and any other agencies must be informed as fully as possible about the role and functions of the European Ombudsman, as this may also help reduce the number of complaints submitted which do not

come under this institution's remit. The knowledge that citizens have about what the Ombudsman does is generally limited.

The launch of the new website at the start of 2009 is a welcome measure. However, I think that efforts to provide citizens with the best possible information must be stepped up. I therefore welcome the proposal made by the rapporteur about drafting an interactive guide, allowing citizens to find out as much information as possible about how to go about submitting a complaint, as well as about easily identifying the right way to resolve the problems they are facing.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of Mrs Paliadeli's report as I believe it presents a complete, detailed overview of what the European Ombudsman does in terms of handling and resolving citizens' complaints.

At the same time, I want to congratulate Mr Diamandouros for the work he has done throughout 2008 and for the record number of inquiries and cases resolved. The European Ombudsman is an extremely important institution as it brings the European Union closer to its citizens. This mediator ensures that the European Union's institutions and bodies operate in its citizens' interest in a transparent, fair, proper and non-discriminatory manner, and in total compliance with procedures.

The number of complaints registered in 2008, considered inadmissible, is extremely high and is on the rise compared with previous years. This is why I think that proper, continuous, dynamic information campaigns need to be run in every Member State. As European citizens do not know the best person to contact when their rights are breached, they very often contact the European Ombudsman without good reason. However, the European Ombudsman can resolve only the cases of maladministration involving the work of the European Union's institutions. Cooperation between the European Ombudsman and EU institutions must be improved.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) This report gives a clear and comprehensive view of the European Ombudsman's activities in 2008. Its new layout and the new way of presenting statistical data have helped make this report clearer and more comprehensible than those previously tabled.

The Ombudsman recorded an increase in the number of complaints referred to him, although only 802 of the 3 406 complaints received in 2008 fell within his mandate. I find it highly positive that an amicable solution was found in 36% of the cases closed. I think the number of inadmissible complaints is still too high, and an information campaign is needed among European citizens to raise their awareness of the Ombudsman's functions and competence.

It is one of the European Ombudsman's priorities to ensure that citizens' rights under EU law are respected at every level in the Union and that EU institutions and bodies conform to the highest standards of administration. It is important to ensure that citizens receive prompt and substantive responses to their enquiries, complaints and petitions, and also to strengthen their trust in the European Union and its institutions.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Paliadeli report on the annual report on the activities of the European Ombudsman, Mr Diamandouros, because it enables the European system of decision making to be applied every day with the greatest regard for the principle of openness and as closely as possible to the citizens.

This is an extremely useful remedy for the citizens, businesses and other organisations throughout Europe, confronted as they are with cases of maladministration within the European institutions. I am particularly delighted that the revision of the Ombudsman's Statute, and specifically the strengthening of his powers of investigation, will help to ensure that citizens can have full confidence in his ability to conduct a thorough investigation of their complaints, without restrictions.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of the Paliadeli report on the European Ombudsman's activities. The Ombudsman provides an important service to EU citizens and helps ensure that the European institutions operate within both the law and wider general principles. These wider principles include equality, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and I accordingly supported my colleague Ms Auken's amendment seeking to define more clearly the concept of 'maladministration'.

Iosif Matula (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of Mrs Paliadeli's report on the European Ombudsman's activities as I believe that Mr Diamandouros has made a significant contribution in terms of resolving citizens'

problems and bringing the European Union's institutions closer to citizens. At the same time, I wish to congratulate the rapporteur for her efforts in completing this report.

The European Mediator has played a key role in increasing transparency and responsibility as part of the European Union's decision-making process and administrative system. I sincerely hope that the 44 inquiries closed with critical remarks in 2008 will lead, in the future, to a reduction in the number of maladministration cases. I am in favour of a broad interpretation of the term 'maladministration', which needs to include unlawful administrative acts or infringements of binding legal rules or principles, as well as cases where the administrative authorities have been sloppy, negligent or lacking in transparency in their duty to citizens or have infringed other principles of good administration.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In view of the important role played by the European Ombudsman, in that he promotes transparency in the relations between the European Union and its citizens, I reiterate my position that constructive relationships have been developed among all the Community institutions and bodies.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted for the Paliadeli report on the annual report on the European Ombudsman's activities because I believe that the Ombudsman has carried out his duties in an active and balanced manner, in terms of examining and managing complaints, conducting and concluding investigations, maintaining constructive relations with the institutions and bodies of the European Union and raising citizens' awareness regarding their rights in respect of those institutions and bodies. It is worth highlighting the good level of cooperation between the European Ombudsman and other European bodies, particularly the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions. For this reason, by voting for the report, we wanted to give him our backing in his role as an external control mechanism and as a valuable source of proposals for improvements to European administration.

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution on the European Ombudsman's activities in 2008, which emphasises the growing number of complaints concerning the EU's lack of transparency. This data worries me. I therefore support this resolution, which calls for the Ombudsman's activities to be given a higher profile. Indeed, it is regrettable that 36% of the 355 inquiries completed by the Ombudsman in 2008 concern the lack of transparency of the European institutions, and include cases in which requests for information were refused. I feel it is important to point out that responsible and transparent administration of the European Union is a guarantee of the trust that the citizens place in the European Union.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) I fully endorse the resolution of the European Parliament on the annual report on the European Ombudsman's activities in 2008, and voted in favour of its adoption. The proposal to set up a joint website for the European institutions is especially valuable. This would allow interested parties to find the right institution for each matter and to direct letters, questions and complaints to the appropriate address. This would be an invaluable aid to the citizens of EU Member States. At the moment, most people have problems with this. People have approached me many times with a request for information about where they can gain access to documents or lodge a complaint, because they do not know to whom to turn. They send letters everywhere, and then are embittered by the lack of replies and disillusioned with the functioning of the EU institutions, including the lengthiness of administrative procedures. On the other hand, the Ombudsman, instead of replying to the appropriate complaints, has to grapple with the more than 75% of complaints which are not within his area of competence. The new website would be an excellent guide to the areas of competence of the European institutions. Until it is set up, I would ask the European Ombudsman to pass on each complaint directly to the national or regional ombudsman with the appropriate competence. I also support the idea of running a broader information campaign with the objective of raising citizens' awareness of the functions and areas of competence of the members of the European ombudsman network.

- Report: Alain Lamassoure (A7-0045/2009)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) We must have clear rules regarding the EU budget for the transitional period between the Treaty of Nice and the Treaty of Lisbon.

Given that the following months are crucial to the European Union's budgetary policy and that, following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, budgetary transfers or reviews will follow up until the start of 2010, a clear-cut procedure must be established for this transitional period to facilitate the implementation of the budget and the adoption of amending budgets. As part of the budgetary conciliation procedure

scheduled for 19 November, the European Commission, European Union Council and European Parliament must reach an agreement on adopting transitional guidelines. The European Parliament's delegation must adopt a strong, solid position as part of the negotiations. This is why I voted in favour of Mr Lamassoure's report.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon will change the current budgetary framework of the EU and result in a need to adopt legal acts to implement it. These include, in particular, adoption of the new regulation on the multiannual financial framework and of the financial regulation on the new principles on how to adopt and implement the budget, and approval of the new interinstitutional agreement. As the whole procedure of adopting these new measures will take several months, I agree with the rapporteur that transitional guidelines are needed, which should come in together with the entry into force of the treaty.

These guidelines will be important to allow the institutions to implement the budget and approve amending budgets, as well as for the 2011 budget procedure, if necessary.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the imminent entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which strengthens Parliament's role in several areas, particularly the budget. I agree with the Lamassoure report on transitional procedural guidelines and I therefore voted in favour of it, since transitional measures are needed until the Treaty of Lisbon is in force.

I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on his proactive approach and the quality of the work carried out. I would stress that the transitional measures must not stray from the general principles laid down in the new treaty, nor must they jeopardise any future legislative procedures. I must also point to the need to cut down on the current number of amending budgets, which has been excessive, and urge the Commission to table proposals for the adoption of a regulation containing the multiannual financial framework and for the adaptation of the financial regulation.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The report focuses on transitional procedural guidelines on budgetary matters in view of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Of course, because of the changes introduced into budgetary procedure, the entry into force of the treaty – to which we have been and remain opposed – requires the adoption of these transitional measures, given that the European Union budget for 2010 will still be approved within the framework provided by the Treaty of Nice. The subject of this report, therefore, is not the Treaty of Lisbon itself, but the need to adopt a procedure that makes it possible to implement the budget for 2010.

Since we are aware of this need, we voted against all the proposed amendments to the report that would end up blocking implementation of the budget, which would be an extremely negative outcome. Nonetheless, we cannot vote in favour of a report that says straight away in paragraph 1: the European Parliament 'welcomes the imminent entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon'. Our stance is demanded by the most basic sense of consistency, given that the treaty will have profoundly negative consequences for the future of Europe's workers and citizens, for reasons that we have explained on many occasions, and its ratification process was profoundly undemocratic, hence our decision to abstain in the final overall vote.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The new budgetary procedures laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon are, without doubt, what really transform the European Union, in institutional terms, into a superstate. This is because, while the contributions to the Community budgets remain in essence State contributions derived from national taxes, the vote on the budget will henceforth take place without the Member States' governments being able to have the final say.

This is of particular concern as regards agriculture, which ceases to be a compulsory expense and which will no doubt be sacrificed for the sake of the clientelistic whims of this House. Aside from this fundamental problem, it is unacceptable to crudely engineer the immediate application of the new procedures. In these times of crisis, one cannot 'play' with European taxpayers' money for the sake of politically sensitive issues. We need a financial regulation and an interinstitutional agreement negotiated in the correct form, and too bad if it takes time.

In the meantime, we must continue to apply the existing methods and procedures and reject any amending budget or transfer for which there is no urgent requirement.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon will entail significant changes in many areas, starting with the budgetary procedure. A report ensuring the transition between the

two procedures, one currently in use and the other envisaged in the new treaty, is of significant benefit. This is precisely why I have considered it appropriate to support it in its entirety. The procedural guidelines set out in a report will facilitate the budgetary activities of the three institutions involved so that the budget can be implemented efficiently, particularly with regard to budgetary transfers. The request made, on the rapporteur's initiative, to adapt the Financial Regulation to the new rules in the Treaty of Lisbon in the shortest possible time is another measure which is an immediate necessity. Furthermore, we will expect the adoption of the transitional guidelines considered during the budgetary conciliation meeting set for 19 November, prior to the Council's second reading, confident that they will be given due importance.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The Treaty of Lisbon entails a huge number of changes, including budgetary amendments which are very important, especially the suppression of the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenses. The 2010 budget was adopted according to the old treaty, but until the implementation of the budgetary procedure for 2011, the institutions may still need to deal with the implementation of the budget, adopt amending budgets and proceed with the budgetary procedure for 2011 before the Treaty of Lisbon comes into force.

The Lamassoure report identifies the limits and conditions where the European Parliament can authorise the relevant committee to negotiate at the budgetary conciliation which will take place on 19 November. I welcome the initiative presented by this report which was drafted in record time. I also congratulate the Commission for the efficient manner in which they have provided us with the current transitional rules.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) If you consider the excessive number of amending budgets, you could get the impression that the EU is incapable of planning. Clearly, that view would not be completely mistaken. You only need think of the tighter and tighter network of EU agencies with its constantly growing budget and the associated potential overlaps of competence and duplications of work. This also applies to the new External Action Service to be created under the Treaty of Lisbon, for which it is necessary to shape the EU budget in such a way that the new system, on the one hand, does not result in any duplication, but instead, allows synergies to be exploited, and that, on the other hand, parliamentary control cannot be circumvented, the Member States cannot be blocked and national competences remain un-neutered. This amending budget is premature, given that the Treaty of Lisbon is about to enter into force, as a number of issues still appear unresolved. I have therefore voted 'no'.

Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the report by my colleague, the Chairman of the Committee on Budgets, Mr Lamassoure. Indeed, this report calls for the European Parliament's new powers to be respected from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, and transitional rules are thus requested for the interim period pending the application of the new budgetary rules provided for by the same treaty. The new treaty makes Parliament equally responsible, with the Council, for adopting the budget, even in respect of 'compulsory' expenditure (agriculture and international agreements), which, until now, was decided on exclusively by the Member States. Parliament's new powers cannot be implemented until new procedural regulations, which are necessary in order to put into practice the general provisions of the new treaty, have been adopted. This report emphasises the fact that this situation is worrying, for I do not want the Council and the Commission to continue with their 'business as usual' approach in the meantime. I therefore call for transitional rules to be adopted without delay, and the next meeting between the Council and Parliament to negotiate the 2010 budget could be an opportunity to adopt them ...

12. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

13. Written declarations included in the register (Rule 123): see Minutes

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

15. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

16. Adjournment of the session

(The sitting was closed at 11.45)