

THURSDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.05)

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. G20 Summit in Pittsburgh (24-25 September) (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

4. The effects of the global financial and economic crisis on developing countries and on development cooperation (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

5. Freedom of information in Italy (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on freedom of information in Italy.

Viviane Reding, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, freedom of expression and freedom of information represent a foundation of a free, democratic and pluralistic society. That is my firm belief as a former journalist and it is also the firm belief of the European Union. That is why all the EU institutions – Parliament, the Council and the Commission – have signed up to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 11 of which states that: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.’

I would like to recall that the EU Charter also states, in Article 51(1), where and when those fundamental rights apply. I quote again: ‘The provisions of this charter are addressed to the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and to the Member States’, but ‘only when they are implementing Union law’.

Within the EU’s sphere of competence, which we have to respect, the European Commission has always stood up for freedom of the media, freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom of the press, whether within the EU or in our external relations with third countries. I recall, in particular, the important role played by the EU’s ‘Television without Frontiers’ Directive which, since 1989, has made sure that citizens in all EU Member States are free to receive, without restrictions, broadcasts from other EU countries; an EU directive which has substantially contributed to the free flow of information across borders and to a more pluralistic media landscape in all Member States. In this context, I would like to thank the European Parliament for having helped the Commission to get a modernised version of this directive which extends the freedom of information across borders, beyond broadcasting, to other audiovisual services and, particularly, those transmitted by Internet.

This directive needs to be implemented by all EU Member States by the end of the year and will make important contributions to a pluralistic landscape when it also comes to the online environment. Let me also recall three other very important elements of this directive.

Firstly, the promotion of independent TV productions. There is a rule in the directive that broadcasters need to reserve at least 10% of their transmission time or 10% of their programming budget to European works created by producers who are independent from the broadcasters.

Secondly, the directive foresees in its modernised version the right of journalists and news organisations to access short extracts across the EU for the purpose of short reporting.

Thirdly, and this is of utmost importance, there is a reference in the new directive to the need to have independent media authorities at national level. This is a reference which was proposed by the Commission

and which could only be adopted in the end thanks to strong support by the European Parliament. Thus, for the broadcasting sector, the modernised Television Without Frontiers Directive can be seen as a charter for freedom of cross-border information in the EU.

Now let me recall another important aspect in the EU's field of competence where this institution can act and has acted for the benefit of media pluralism. I mean radio spectrum policy. You all know that there cannot be broadcasting without access to radio spectrum, and it is the EU policy to ensure that all players on the market get non-discriminatory access to radio spectrum. National authorities are thus not entitled to freeze, by means of spectrum allocation, the competitive situation on the media market for the benefit of the operators already active on that market. The European Court of Justice, by the way, has confirmed this important principle, which directly results from the freedom to provide services, in its *Centro Europa* judgment. The Commission welcomed that ruling as a contribution to fair competition and as an important foundation for strengthening media pluralism. On that basis, the Commission has repeatedly acted against Member States where the system of spectrum management has appeared to be in contradiction with this principle.

By way of example, I would like to recall the 2006 infringement proceedings on radio spectrum allocation in Italy, which my colleague Neelie Kroes and I opened. Under the pressure of this procedure, the Italian authorities are now changing their approach. The result of this will be a substantial market opening and a win for media pluralism. Spectrum policy is therefore a clear example of an area where the EU can act within its field of competences in order to enhance competition for the resources on which broadcasters depend, and thereby strengthen media pluralism.

Concerning the written press, the competences of the EU are substantially more limited. The written press is one of those prime examples of national, or even regional, competences and its situation very often reflects the varying cultural traditions in our different Member States. There is thus no EU legislation specifically on the written press, nor can there be legislation under the treaties as they stand. Nevertheless, in the EU institutions and, in particular, the European Commission, we have always flanked the development of the written press across the EU. I recall that in my capacity as EU Media Commissioner, I had numerous meetings with editors-in-chief from all around Europe to discuss the current issues relating to media freedom and media pluralism.

In June 2009, this led to the European Charter on Freedom of the Press, drafted by journalists across Europe. I fully endorsed that charter when the final outcome of this work was handed over to me. The Charter on the Freedom of the Press initiated by the European journalist community is an important reaffirmation of the basic values enshrined in fundamental legal texts such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. It is also a reminder for all policymakers in their field of competence that, in order to have effective freedom of the press, public authorities do indeed have a role to play: they must be ready to protect freedom of expression and foster its development. The charter is therefore an important step towards reinforcing these basic values and rights, allowing journalists to invoke them against governments or against political public authorities whenever they feel that the freedom of their work is unjustifiably threatened.

The honourable Members will see that strong political commitment is being shown by the EU's institutions, and particularly by the Commission, to fundamental rights and freedom of information, of expression and of the media. We are using our competences to uphold those rights and freedoms in our work, on the basis of the Treaties, and will continue to do so.

However, let me also touch on another important aspect, namely the fact that fundamental rights apply to EU policies does not make the EU competent for all matters relating to fundamental rights in one Member State or another. Let us not forget that the Member States have constitutions, many of them with long traditions, and that in all Member States, there are courts, appeal courts and constitutional courts which ensure that fundamental rights are respected and enforced whenever national authorities act. We had an example of this as recently as yesterday in Italy.

This is the result of the fact that we have a division of labour, because Europe is not a superstate, but is comprised of 27 sovereign Member States and will continue to operate like this under the new Lisbon Treaty too.

I would therefore call on you not to make use of the EU institutions to solve problems which should, under our Treaties, be solved at national level. We should not claim a role that we do not have, and we will not have it under the Lisbon Treaty either. Let us concentrate here on applying effectively the rules, principles,

rights and freedoms in areas where the EU is competent. This can lead to very important progress, and I have mentioned several concrete examples of this in my speech.

Let me add another example of where we could act. Paul Rübig, a Member of this House, recently proposed in a budgetary amendment a new EU programme called Erasmus for Journalists. Such a programme would, in difficult times for the written press, allow journalists to work for a limited time with editorial staff in other Member States. It would also allow journalists to discover the political, economic and social situation in other Member States and to write about it. It would allow journalists to compare the situation across Europe and to present that to the readers, including the situation with regard to freedom of the press. That is why I encourage the European Parliament to look very favourably on these proposals, which certainly have the support of the EU Media Commissioner.

Joseph Daul, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Presidents, ladies and gentlemen, if I have asked to take the floor on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in this debate on freedom of the press in Italy, it is first and foremost to denounce the unfortunate use of this European Parliament to debate national issues. It is also to denounce an unfair and dishonest attack on the government of a European Member State in which the rule of law is applied as rigorously as it is in the rest of Europe.

On the first point, I will refer to the President of the Italian Republic, who I already quoted yesterday and who voiced his opinion last week: 'The European Parliament' – I quote – 'cannot be a sounding board for the political conflicts and controversies that are a matter of course within the Member States and their national parliaments.' I quote the President of the Italian Republic further: 'Nor can the European Parliament be a kind of court of appeal that rules on the decisions of the national parliaments or on the behaviour of the national governments.' I do not mean to offend President Napolitano, who is a friend, when I say that he does not toe the same political line as Prime Minister Berlusconi or myself or the group that I represent.

(Exclamation by Mr Schulz)

Please respect my freedom of speech, Mr Schulz! This morning, I would like respect to be shown for freedom of speech and freedom of the press alike!

(Interruption by Mr Schulz)

We know who the troublemakers are. It does not bother me. I am not annoyed. Mr President. All I am asking is that you let me speak. This is not the way to have a debate.

However, these words express, in no uncertain terms, the respect that should be shown for our democratic institutions, be they national or European. The fact is, the debate that we are holding this morning has absolutely nothing to do with the reason why the European Parliament exists. Indeed, what is it about? Are Italian politicians prevented from organising a debate on freedom of the press or on any other subject in their own national parliaments? I think not. Are Italian citizens prevented from voicing their disapproval of any given law? No. Are the Italian courts prevented from enforcing the law? No, as we have clearly seen. Is the European Court of Justice incapable of punishing an Italian law that is at odds with the European treaties? No. The answer to all of these questions is clearly no.

Under these circumstances, the debate that has been organised in this House is nothing other than a petty political and partisan scheme to upset a political opponent. No matter what some of our fellow Members may claim, the Italian Republic functions as it should in Europe, democratically and in accordance with the rule of law. To claim the opposite is to ignore the reality of matters; no one is fooled by that.

The role of the European Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, is not to become a chamber for settling the scores of national political rivals. This Chamber is not the right place for trying to undermine the credibility of a government which, I would add, is politically accountable to its own citizens. This is why we have elections. Thank you for your attention.

David-Maria Sassoli, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, every one of us is influenced by the circumstances in which we live, and you too will have been told before coming here to Brussels: 'remember that you have a big responsibility, that we have a big responsibility', that of making your country better.

We know that our countries will be better if Europe is stronger and is able to respond with a sense of fairness to its citizens' expectations. We are obviously aware that this is possible if we all act together; if we are able to pool our most precious resources, our Constitutions, that set of values and of legal rules, of rights, that

are Europe's true assets. So many controversies plague my country, but I would like straight away to reassure everyone that we are talking about a great democratic country, which has a great Constitution. Yesterday was a very important day for we Italians, because the Constitutional Court, faced with confusion and requests for impunity, reaffirmed a simple and time-honoured principle – that all citizens are equal before the law. However, we know that even great countries can go off course, can mix up public property with private interests. Nonetheless, we cannot allow the Member States to become weak.

The right to independent information, without pressures or conditions on the part of government authorities, must be guaranteed, and this is a public good, a good for everyone, in every country. This good must be protected without hesitation by the Union. We must endeavour to provide common rules, to set limits beyond which information is no longer considered to be independent. There is an urgent need for the Union to intervene, to adopt a directive that lays down guidelines on pluralism and on the protection of a good that must be available to all. Mrs Reding, never forget that we are a Parliament and not a museum where things are left to moulder away.

Mário David (PPE). – (PT) Three or four weeks ago in Portugal, Prisa – a Spanish company that is a known supporter of the Socialist Party and majority shareholder of the television channel TVI – ordered the cancelling of the evening programme *Jornal Nacional de Sexta-Feira*. Mr Sassoli, I would like to ask you whether the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament has the same intention of studying what is going on in other countries, or if its intentions amount to nothing more than the political chicanery that we are witnessing here this morning.

David-Maria Sassoli, on behalf of the S&D Group. – (IT) Thank you for your question, because it gives me the opportunity to explain myself. I did not have this opportunity in the time that was allocated to me.

(The President asked the Members to allow the speaker to continue)

As I was saying, I am glad you asked me the question because it gives me the opportunity to say that the directive that we are requesting from the Commission must be for all Member States. This is not an Italian issue: this is a European issue. I would also say that we want the question that we are to submit at Strasbourg to be amended. We want it to cover the debate on pluralism in Italy and in Europe. Thank you very much for your question.

President. – Colleagues, if there is going to be such a discussion in the chamber, I shall not give permission for blue-card questions. It is my decision. I am sorry, but we must be much calmer about the whole issue, otherwise the rule will be no blue cards. I do not want the sitting to be disturbed. Please behave properly.

Guy Verhofstadt, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – (FR) Mr President, the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, is right to say that the European Parliament is not the place for settling disputes between political parties within Member States, or for opposing decisions taken by the national parliaments. The problem in Italy – and I believe that Mr Napolitano, the President of the Republic, is absolutely right – must first be settled in Italy.

However – and this is the problem, Mr Daul – no one can deny that there is a problem in Europe and in Italy. The problem I have with your speech is that you are denying that there is a problem.

(Applause)

Mr Napolitano is right. I think that you are right to also highlight what Mr Napolitano said, but it is not a good idea to say here, in this House, that there is not a problem. Why do I say that? I say that because Freedom House has recently published a study in which the countries of the world are divided into three categories of press freedom: free, partly free and not free. It should be pointed out – and I believe that this is a huge problem – that three countries, not just one, not just Italy, but also Romania and Bulgaria, have been included in the 'partly free' category. We are all the more concerned, really concerned, because one of the founding countries of the European Union features among those countries.

Given that we created this European Union in order to uphold, once and for all, our common values of democracy, peace and freedom, it is our duty to intervene. How? I believe that we must ask the Commission, on the basis of our treaties – and, I repeat, this is a request that has already been made – to propose a directive to safeguard the pluralism of the media. This is what must happen, and it is a competence that can be implemented with the European Parliament pursuant to the treaties. This directive should guarantee that our constitutional provisions on freedom of the media are respected fully and harmoniously in all of the countries of the European Union, and certainly in all of the countries in question.

I must also tell you, Mr President, and I will finish here, that I was very disappointed by the Commission's speech. The Member States can all do whatever they like as long as it is compatible with their national Constitutions. That is what we heard from the Commission. I completely disagree. I protest. There are values, there are freedoms that must be defended in this House beyond national interests, beyond national Constitutions.

(Applause)

These are values and principles that really make the European Union what it is. I therefore call on the Commission to review its position and to propose a directive on the issue of media concentration as quickly as possible, and to do so for all of the countries of the European Union.

Cristiana Muscardini (PPE). – *(IT)* Mr President, just to follow up the statements made by Mr Sassoli – who stated in this House that the text that we are to vote on in Strasbourg will be changed – I think it is pointless to debate a text that the proponents themselves have already declared they will change.

President. – Mrs Muscardini, that was not really a procedural request, so I would ask that we observe the rules of procedure.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not going to give the floor to everyone who raises a blue card. I am entitled to do this, and we must move on with our discussion.

We must be quicker in our discussions. Everybody can take the floor in the 'catch-the-eye' session at the end of our debate, so please remember that.

Judith Sargentini, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group. – Mr President, people may think that I will speak in Italian, and people might want to make this an Italian debate, but I am Dutch. I am a Dutch Member of this Parliament and I am very frustrated by the idea that we are talking here as if the issue were an internal Italian debate.

The point is not the way that things are going in Italy – the pressure on journalists, the self-censorship journalists are starting to apply in Italy. The point is that it is a disgrace for Europe. How are we going to tell new Member States, applicant Member States, that they have to have a plural media, that every voice has to be heard in their country, that there should be a debate between all colours and all political parties, if we are unwilling to tell Italy that they have to shape up, that it is wrong to push journalists to change their attitude, that it is wrong to have one person ruling both commercial television and public television.

Mr Verhofstadt has asked for this and I will also ask for it. Mrs Reding, you said Europe is doing its best, fundamental rights are fundamental, but not when it comes to a Member State that is already a Member State. That cannot be true. This is one of the Copenhagen criteria. Everybody has to stick to the Copenhagen criteria.

(Applause)

In order to ensure that this is not an Italian debate, I am also asking for a media concentration directive. The European Parliament has asked for this twice: when is the Commission going to deliver? This heated debate we are having is one which the PPE Group even tried to take off the agenda with the argument that it would not be European. This heated debate shows that something is going on. People are shouting, people are being emotional about it – which is good, because freedom of speech, a plural press, is the key of our democracy.

In Italy, 80% of the people get their daily information from television. If that television is not broadcasting all voices, then people do not get the chance to make their own decisions. That is fundamental to democracy.

(Applause)

We are all educated people. We all have to learn to deal with various truths and make our own truth out of that, and people in Italy have the right to do so. People in Bulgaria, people in the Netherlands, have a right to do so, and I stand up for that right. I might be Dutch, I might not be Italian, but I do care for citizens throughout the whole of Europe.

Trying to get this debate taken off this agenda, trying to say it is not our case, is something we should be ashamed of. The way things are going in Italy makes that country very vulnerable in its democracy. Let us get something going. Media concentration, please, Mrs Reding.

(Applause)

Ryszard Czarnecki, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, it is not only Italy which is a great and wonderful country. The representatives of 27 wonderful countries sit in the European Parliament – if I can just add to what Mr Sassoli has said.

I think it is somewhat of a paradox that I, an anticommunist opposition activist, who never supposed he could agree with anyone whose roots are in that camp, would have to agree with the President of Italy, who is warning against transferring internal disputes to the forum of the European Parliament. I am talking about double standards. There are certain matters which arouse the interest of some political groups in our Parliament. These groups force discussion of these matters in the forum of our Parliament, while other matters are swept under the carpet.

Perhaps there have been similar situations in other countries. In Poland recently, a serving Minister did everything possible, using all available instruments, to keep the President of state television in his position. Ultimately, he was not successful but, at the time, I did not hear that any of the political groups had requested a debate on the matter. Similar situations have occurred in other countries.

Therefore, if we do not want anyone to accuse us of those double standards, we should treat everyone equally. If there is a problem, then at such a time we should always talk about it. If we do not do this, it means there is some kind of political context to it, some kind of political manoeuvring.

Mr Verhofstadt has announced here proposals to impose from above, as it were, certain formal, legal and legislative solutions on certain Member States. I think this is nothing other than introducing a far-reaching, excessive integration of Europe, by the back door as it were, and over the heads of the citizens. It would, in fact, be against the will of public opinion, as it is expressed in elections held to choose governments.

The European Union is still a community based on nations, on nation states. Let us, however, avoid such a shortcut in which we, as it were, over the heads of nation states, establish certain legislation for them.

Mr President, finally, I think it is an internal, Italian matter. It may also be a difficult matter, but the Italians should resolve it themselves. The European Parliament is not the place to resolve these problems.

Patrick Le Hyaric, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, freedom of the press and of information is a fundamental and inalienable right, because it is part of human development. Moreover, it is, as you said, Mrs Reding, recognised by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights on pluralism and Article 51 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union on freedom of expression.

It is on the basis both of this European law and of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and of the OSCE on freedom of the media that our Parliament believes that the President of the Council of Ministers of Italy, the head of what was, after all, a founder member of the European Community, is violating the principles of freedom and pluralism of the press in several ways. He has turned common public assets such as information and culture into true commodities for profit by building a media empire consisting of several television and radio channels, publishing houses, advertising agencies, insurance companies and banks.

What is more, the President of the Italian Council has a say in who is appointed in the public sector of the media. This virtual monopoly on information and its financing allows him to dominate, control and direct not only the majority of the audiovisual press and publishing media, but also their content, to his sole advantage. Such a system of thought-policing is incompatible with fundamental democratic debate, which alone ensures that there is real pluralism of the press and of the media. Let us add that, since the same man and his family hold both the political power and the media power, we are faced with an obvious conflict of interest that is incompatible with a major democracy, a democracy that is modern and vibrant, thanks to its active citizens.

Moreover, Mr Berlusconi wants to limit the publication of judicial information, sues and threatens journalists who criticise him, and sues Italian newspapers such as *La Repubblica*, *L'Unità* and even the daily *Avvenire*, published by Italian bishops. European newspapers, including the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, are also threatened. Ultimately, the independent written press is being crippled financially in two ways: by the 'Tremonti' Decree of 6 August 2008, which reduces public aid for independent newspapers, and by advertising budget cuts. The Berlusconi thought police are now also targeting the constitutional court, the

magistrates, the Federation of Independent Journalists and even the very parliament that Mr Berlusconi is bringing into disrepute.

Under these circumstances, if, on all sides of this House, we are willing to take action to defend what we call the democratic values of the European Union, then we must issue a solemn warning and, Commissioner, we must enforce European law as you have worded it, and say, together with the thousands of Italian intellectuals, creators and journalists, that the freedom to inform and the freedom to be informed must be respected unconditionally in Italy as in the whole of the European Union.

That is why I am proposing to our Parliament the creation of a European observatory on pluralism of the media and the press. This observatory would monitor respect for the principle of the separation of powers between political power and media power throughout the Union, the implementation of a maximum concentration threshold in the media, respect for journalists' rights to inform, and respect for publication rights for independent newspapers.

It would link our Parliament to the national parliaments, to editors and producers, to journalists' associations, to readers and to television viewers. This observatory could prepare a draft directive against concentration and for pluralism. This would be one way, Mr President, of keeping democracy alive within our Europe.

Francesco Enrico Speroni, on behalf of the EFD Group. – (IT) Mr President, the European Union is an area of freedom and of democracy: Italy is no exception, even where information is concerned. Were it not enough to consider the countless publications on sale in news-stands, or to see the wide range of television channels available, including local channels, one need only analyse the reports by independent bodies such as the Pavia Monitoring Unit, which established that the opposition has 60% of the airtime during public television news broadcasts and 49% of the airtime on the Mediaset networks. One should then consider that, of 455 judgments handed down by the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on freedom of information, only seven concern Italy, compared with 29 for France and 28 for the United Kingdom.

As for claiming that media outlets would be influenced by the fact that the Italian Prime Minister, exercising his constitutional right as a citizen, has brought legal proceedings against some of them, it is very important to recognise in this context that, in Italy, from the first instance rulings up to the final and definitive rulings, the judiciary certainly does not give in to the Head of Government; rather, at times the opposite seems true.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in Italy: whoever claims otherwise should have the courage not to submit general motions for resolutions from a purely political perspective, but to initiate the procedure referred to in Article 7 of the Treaty, which requires documentary evidence of the state of completely non-existent affairs.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Mr President, we need a revolution in democracy. Mr President, would you be sitting here today if, in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, Italian conditions had paved the way for Berlusconiisation? What we are concurrently discovering, however, is that it is not only Italy that is a problem, but that a Berlusconiisation of Europe is taking place and that is very, very dangerous.

As a member of the Convention to draft the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, I was able to witness how tough a struggle there was about this key issue of the concentration of the media. Unfortunately, due to the resistance of certain forces, we did not succeed at that point in making progress. Almost 10 years later, we are paying the price. This is a highly dangerous development. If I take a look just at a single country in which I worked for many years: what happened to the assault gun of democracy, as *Spiegel* magazine once called it, under the real conditions of the new economic concentration? Why, moreover, have we not, under these conditions, where Europe really is required in this area of freedom of the press and expression which is so crucial, had the progress that so many Europeans have been waiting for, for which, in fact, some of them started revolutions? Where is this directive? Mrs Reding, what are you afraid of? What forces are at work here? Are those forces called Murdoch, or something else?

Turning now to public service television – in Austria, that is where 62% of the population get their information from. So, who controls it? It is almost exclusively the governing political parties. When I look at the government apparatus in Germany, I can see that, there too, the wrong people are at the helm. We need freedom of the press – and not just in Italy!

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, the television images of this empty Chamber will be the best judge of the contrivance and the sham that is this debate. In fact, in 2004, a debate was held in this House on freedom of information in Italy. We passed a resolution in which the proponents declared themselves to be

alarmed by the situation in my country. There was a centre-right government, and there was a Prime Minister: Silvio Berlusconi. Following the victory of the left in 2006, the problem miraculously disappeared. There were no more of the dramatic debates within the European Parliament, no more of the international warnings and no more of the collecting of signatures so dear to champagne socialists.

Suddenly, however, after yet another electoral win by Mr Berlusconi, the danger to the free movement of ideas has magically returned. In short, when the centre-right governs, the press is at risk, and when the centre-left governs, there are no problems. It is a pity, however, that the percentage of civil and criminal actions brought against journalists in my country by exponents of the left, such as Massimo D'Alema and Romano Prodi, is at an all-time high. Such sponsors account for up to 68% of these actions.

Ultimately I wonder whether it is possible for freedom of the press to have been jeopardised by a single request for justice by Mr Berlusconi. This may perhaps be explained better than I have explained it by an interview with Mr Cohn-Bendit, which I quote word for word: 'It is absurd to compare Mr Berlusconi to a dictator: there are no prisons for dissidents, he has the support of the majority, and the centre-left has simply lost'. Simply lost.

It is a very serious indignity for our beloved Italy to be subjected to a surreal and farcical debate by a handful of professional disinformers. Moreover, this indignity will cost dear, because once again they will lose the support of the Italians, who will vote in even higher numbers than today for Mr Berlusconi, not least because they believe he is committed to fighting for the well-being of Italy. You, on the other hand, ladies and gentlemen, seem intent – determined – to destroy our country's image. Yet the damage you are doing to Europe is perhaps greater than the damage done to Italy: because what you are offering the public is a caricature of Europe, where you delude yourselves that you are handing out popular mandates with the aim not of upholding people's rights, but of turning reality on its head in a Stalinist style that is today paradoxically characteristic of the exponents of a group that calls itself liberal.

Indeed deny if you can – ladies and gentlemen from Antonio Di Pietro's party – that you are communists. Your history follows you and it is the history of those who have never given up using lies as a way of branding their political opponent as dangerous. However, the real threat to democracy is created by those who seek to take our future away from us by refusing to accept the verdict of free elections and conjuring up ghosts.

We will not relinquish that future; thus, we will fight during this parliamentary term to prevent the European project, in which we passionately believe, from being distorted by the confusion between freedom of expression and misrepresentation, and between justice and the manipulation of powers. Know this, would-be liberals: you will not weaken our determination to contribute to the common good...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Martin Schulz (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Mauro something. In preparing this debate, I spoke with him a number of times. He was in my office yesterday, and we have a very, very cooperative relationship.

That is why I feel able to ask the following questions without a surge of emotions. Can you imagine that the reason for the complex debate in Italy is that Italy is, to my knowledge, the only democratic state in which the largest media operator is also the Head of Government? Could it be that this combination of interests is precisely the reason that we are having this debate?

(Applause)

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, I am most grateful to Mr Schulz. I would stress that, if there is one debate that we will not only not evade but would also happily take part in, so that we can also discuss the role played by Mr Murdoch, for example, it is the debate on media concentration in Europe. And, above all, of course, we want to ensure that this debate is not used deliberately to attack one country.

Obviously I must stress that I have willingly responded to Mr Schulz, because I consider him to be Silvio Berlusconi's most important political creation.

Claude Moraes (S&D). – Mr President, as expressed by Martin Schulz just now, from the perspective of the Socialist and Democrat Group, this is a debate which is not just about Italy. I, too, am not an Italian speaker. Our group feels that media pluralism is not just an Italian issue. All Member States are involved, and all Member States of the European Union should guarantee these principles of media pluralism.

This House has long been asking the Commission to take action to guarantee pluralism of the media. The Commission is committed to putting into place a three-step approach to define the indicators of pluralism, including a working document, an independent study and a communication.

Commissioner Reding has not mentioned that two of these steps have already been taken. Within our group, we are waiting impatiently for the third step, a communication on pluralism, and for a set of legislative measures capable of guaranteeing this principle across the Union – across the whole of the Union and not just in Italy. Indeed, our perspective is based on the fact that the European Union has not only been an economic and monetary union, or a loose coalition of Member States, but a collection of values also. It is incredibly important in this debate to restate that perspective.

One of these rights – freedom of information, defined by the EU Charter as the right to receive and communicate information without interference from public authorities – is vital. For Italy, and the particular position expressed by David Sassoli from my group, this is a genuine concern; but the wider concern for the European Union is a challenge for our group: for all Members, including those Members from Italy. This is an unprecedented situation in Italy, but it could be a dangerous situation for the whole of the European Union, and that is the perspective of our group.

Sonia Alfano (ALDE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would first of all like to address the Commissioner, who maintained that it is not the job of this Parliament to resolve certain issues. I would point out, however, that it is the job of this Parliament to ensure that the Treaty and the Member States' constitutions are respected. A few months ago, the Italian Minister for Justice declared that he had arranged for the imminent closure of some parts of YouTube and the Internet. I would point out that only in China do such things happen. Article 21 of the Italian Constitution decrees that the press may not be subject to authorisation or censorship.

As other Members have already confirmed, Italy is the only country in which the Head of Government has a monopoly on public, and now also private, television channels and in which, unfortunately, a law is being passed that will, in fact, prevent journalists from publishing even judicial reports. This is because, were they to be published, Italians would probably learn about Mr Berlusconi's part in the 1992 massacres, Mafia massacres in which Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino died.

(The President called for order)

Mr President, I would ask you to ensure that we have order in this House, since we are not at a market.

Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, in my opinion, freedom of the press in a country can only be properly assessed by considering every aspect of the question. This should include a thorough analysis of the markets, including the advertising markets, and of the habits of the population, like the average time spent watching TV, distribution of the printed press and levels of literacy, etc. We would notice certain spectacular differences in those factors in Italy compared to many other Member States. As long as these outstanding differences, for example, concentration of media ownership and party political power over the public media, are not openly discussed, the Italian pattern will insidiously convince many people.

I would like to compare it to a virus – not dangerous enough to kill the bearer, but definitely weakening him and with the potential to infect others. Members of the European Parliament present should know that in Estonia, one centre-left party has recklessly followed the current Italian model by concentrating all public and private resources under the party's command and spreading unilateral messages all over the capital city of Tallinn. I would have nothing against a European discussion on that issue here as well.

That is why, unlike the PPE Group, I believe it is time to discuss the freedom of the press and to adopt a resolution. The resulting resolution should not be considered some kind of settling of scores between political parties in one or other Member State but rather should be viewed as an opportunity to promote the values on which our Union is based.

Potito Salatto (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, I have held up my card three times now, and you have not given me the floor, whereas you have given it to Mr Schulz.

I shall therefore now address my question to the speaker and to all those who have taken the floor, irrespective of their political group: have they enquired as to whether the centre-left governments have ever issued a law that could prevent the concentration of the mass media in the hands of Prime Minister Berlusconi?

Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE). – That is an interesting question. It takes historical research: have the centre-left governments done anything about it? In my speech, I pointed out that the centre-left party is doing the same as Mr Berlusconi is doing in Italy, so the debate is about Europe, about freedom of speech and about threats to freedom of speech from either side – left or right. That is my opinion.

President. – I would like to inform Mr Salatto that unfortunately, I cannot give the floor to everyone who wishes to put a blue-card question. It would make the debate overrun. I am sorry.

Oreste Rossi (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this morning I really heard everything being thrown at the Italian Prime Minister except for the fact that, thanks to his entrepreneurial activities, he provides jobs for tens of thousands of people. Excuse me if that seems a negligible factor at a time like this.

Those who maintain that there is no freedom or plurality of information in Italy are lying, and they know it. I invite you, ladies and gentlemen – not just the Italians among you, but the others too – to study the articles published, in any given month in 2009, in the three main national newspapers: *Il Corriere*, *La Stampa* and *La Repubblica*. You will thus be able to realise that, depending on the month, 60-70% of those articles are against both the majority government and the ministers that make up the government.

The percentage of articles that were negative towards the government and, in this case, Minister Maroni, in the month after the adoption of the security package, rose to 80%. As far as television is concerned, I invite you to watch the programmes by Giovanni Floris, Michele Santoro and Fabio Fazio: only then will you be in a position to vote on this resolution.

Frank Vanhecke (NI). – (NL) Mr President, I see that, fortunately, I am not the only one who very much questions this rather absurd initiative, the apparent purpose of which is to brand Italy a country where freedom of information is fundamentally under threat. Evidently, the socialists have quite a few problems with there being at least one European Member State where the politically correct left does not yet control all the newspapers and all the media. Berlusconi's Italy – and I am choosing my words carefully, as I have no dealings with the man – is a model of freedom, freedom of expression and press diversity compared to many other European countries.

Our fellow Member, Mr Verhofstadt, who has just launched a merciless attack on Mr Berlusconi in this House, is famous, or rather infamous, in his own country – my country – for his threats and personal intervention when journalists criticised his government; and this just recently. He is probably the very last person who should be speaking about this. What I should have liked to see from the Commission was an initiative to restore freedom of expression and information in all European Member States wherever these are under very real threat from freedom-killing legislation, often on the pretext of supposedly combating racism. Or how about a Commission initiative when, for example – as also happened just recently – a Dutch politician cannot even obtain permission to enter another European Member State, the United Kingdom. I could also cite the very recent example of my own country where my party, Vlaams Belang, the second largest party in Flanders, suffers discrimination at the hands of the taxpayer-funded public broadcaster; discrimination that, just recently, was described as electoral misrepresentation by Belgium's highest legal body, the State Council. It is true that there are many problems with freedom of information in Europe but they are, by no means, all taking place in Berlusconi's Italy; the reverse is true.

Manfred Weber (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in the light of Mr Mauro's persuasive speech, suddenly even Mr Schulz has conceded that it would be a good thing for us to talk about Europe as a whole now.

Alas, the title of today's debate is Italy. I can absolutely see why many of you have no interest in talking about Europe as a whole. If, for example, I were to look at the media interests of Germany's Social Democrats, I would observe that they own 90% of the newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* and that the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) owns 57% of the *Neue Westfälische* newspaper and holds an interest in the WAZ media group. The largest source of income for the SPD today is its media interests. I can therefore absolutely see why many of you have no interest in talking about ownership in other cases, but instead only want to discuss Italy.

This debate is fizzling out because of the situation in Italy and the positive statements that we are hearing. I am not Italian, as you can tell when I speak, but the most convincing argument that comes to my mind is the question of what was the matter between 2006 and 2008 when Italy had a leftist government and, of course, at that time – as Mr Mauro has pointed out – everything was fine and dandy. There were no legislative

proposals tabled by the then government to finally end the concentration of the media, though the power was there.

Today, when there is once again a clear majority for the conservative parties in Italy, there are suddenly problems again. This debate must not give way to dishonesty. As long as the socialists, the leftists in this House, no longer have arguments to back us into a corner, I can very happily carry on with this debate!

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, Mrs Reding, this debate can have only one purpose: sending a powerful political message in favour of freedom of expression and its quality assurance check, which is pluralism of information. It is also important to send the message through Europe, and therefore at European level.

I agree with those who have stressed the fact that freedom of expression and pluralism of information are fundamental foundations of the European project and that they are never permanently conquered or confirmed. Quite the reverse: they are permanently under threat, and the threats come not only from politics, that is, from authoritarianism or populism, or from the retreat from or the denial of freedom and pluralism within the scope of politics, but also from the market, from market concentrations, distortions and abuses.

I therefore believe that this debate is not a matter for just one country, but that it has a European dimension, because it is at the European level that a process of transformation of democracy is occurring.

While democracy was representative when universal suffrage was brought in, making all persons equal – one person, one vote – in the communications market we are not all equal, because we do not all have equal access to radio discussion shows, television debates, columns in the press or editorial comment in the communication media. We cannot therefore all participate equally in constructing the social framework that, nonetheless, democratically, belongs to us all equally across Europe.

That is why this debate is important, to remind you that this year, in 2009, the Commission made a commitment to present before this Parliament a communication to evaluate the possible Europe-wide threats to freedom of expression and pluralism of information, and to call attention to the importance of drafting a directive guaranteeing pluralism of information in terms of the new technologies and, in particular, in terms of television.

It is very important that this debate should take place in Europe, since it is clear that there are many countries in the European Union that cannot tackle this debate by themselves with every guarantee that it will be conducted properly.

If we work from the European Parliament, and on a European scale, we will be sending a strong message of commitment concerning the permanency and survival of freedom of expression within pluralism of information in the 21st century.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ANGELILLI

Vice-President

Gianni Vattimo (ALDE). – (IT) Madam President, I will try to be brief. Italy is truly a champion of liberty, indeed of libertinage – so to speak – as one can infer from reading its newspapers, which Mr Berlusconi wants to gag, which he is suing because they reveal, among other things, his personal relationships, through which channel he also chooses political candidates. His women who visit him are paid either with money or with promises that they will stand for office. The situation is this: Mr Berlusconi controls the Italian media.

It is true, there are no laws against freedom of the press – as yet. Mr Berlusconi is preparing to introduce them. Only recently, we abolished the Alfano law, which was invented by Mr Berlusconi to protect himself from the courts and from all the proceedings currently under way. This is the situation in which we therefore find ourselves. Is it right to ask Europe to deal with this problem? Definitely, because we in Italy are not dealing with it. We are asking Europe to intervene on humanitarian grounds to solve the problem of freedom of the press in Italy. This is what we want you to do, and we believe that it is important for Europe also, if we do not want the virus to spread all too quickly here as well.

Mario Borghesio (EFD). – (IT) Madam President, this has not been a thrilling day for the European Parliament; it has been wasted on a pointless debate, when we all know that there is no country in Europe that has more freedom of expression and of information than ours does.

However, when the left governed Italy and a party such as mine, despite being represented in the Italian Parliament, the Senate and the European Parliament, enjoyed 0.1% of the airtime during television news broadcasts, you, Mr Sassoli – you worked on those television news programmes – did not rend your garments or demonstrate in the streets, let alone give up your handsome salary from RAI.

You champions of freedom of the press against censorship! We heard the Belgians: but does the *Vlaams Belang* party, in Belgium, enjoy this freedom of the press, this breadth of information, or is it censored as we ourselves were? In Italy, they censored even the good Mr Pannella and they all kept quiet – you on the left included. He had to go on a hunger strike: what fine freedom fighters! The Soviet Union of journalists. What freedom does the Italian Press Federation grant to the minority? They have to be silent, they have no column inches or airtime. What fine freedom fighters!

I am sorry, but those of you who are brave enough, go and carry out those demonstrations chaining yourselves together in Beijing, Cuba and Tehran, where people die for the sake of press freedom! Shame on you, cowards! Go to Tehran, go to Tehran, cowards, cowards, cowards, cowards! Long live freedom, long live our free and democratic country...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Carlo Casini (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to rationalise an apparently ambiguous feeling that I have after this first stage of the debate, because I fully subscribe to the strong words spoken by my chairman, Mr Daul, but I also subscribe to the words of Mr Sassoli who should, by all rights, be a political opponent of mine.

Let me explain myself better: am I schizophrenic for having such ambivalent feelings, or am I trying unnecessarily to reconcile the fact that, in Italy, I sit on the opposition benches while, here, I find myself next to the People of Freedom party, in the People's Party? I feel I can answer that by highlighting an obvious contrast between the scope and the importance of the subject of freedom of information, which is a very important subject... Were Montesquieu alive today, he would have spoken not only of legislative, executive and judicial powers, but of other powers too, and he would have put the fourth power, the press, in first place, as it represents a problem of freedom, of the fight against mental slavery, and a problem of democracy.

On the other hand, the straw that broke the camel's back after months and months of barbarisation of the entire Italian press – let it be said – of the right and of the left; the quality of the Italian press has been poor for months now because politics really has reached a low point – was Mr Berlusconi's legal action. Please indulge me: I was a criminal judge for four years in the Fifth criminal division of the Court of Cassation, where we judged the crime of libel. This is how I know Mr Mauro is right: I saw many of these actions for libel, and no one protested. Citizens have the right to defend themselves in these situations too.

I therefore hope that, by making a genuine attempt to reconcile seemingly opposing points, we will actually come up with a new and better way of tackling the problem for the whole of Europe and not just in regard to Italy.

Gianluca Susta (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, people who seek to label as anti-Italian, subversive and communist anyone who calls for a set of rules on communication and freedom of information that respects pluralism, and which is characterised by a clear separation between the fortunes of those who assume important institutional responsibilities and the wealth they derive from entrepreneurial activities in the publishing and information fields, are making a serious mistake, which must not be forgiven, justified or allowed here in Europe.

Not once in our speeches have we mentioned the Italian Prime Minister. We could have referred to the number of newspapers he owns: 150 in Italy; and around 40 television channels. That is not the problem, however. The problem is that pluralism of information – and in information – is a cornerstone of every free democracy and must be used as a defence against every monopolistic and oligopolistic philosophy and against conflicts of interest.

The sovereignty of each State, the reaffirmation that the European Union is not a superstate, Commissioner Reding, must not make us forget that the European Union also has a Charter of Fundamental Rights from which stems a legislative system that the Member States cannot ignore. You know that, on these very issues, many times the Court of Justice – in the case of Italy, not on issues to do with the system, Mr Speroni – has passed sentences that are still to be carried out.

Globalisation of the markets and the ever-increasing use of the airwaves now require more targeted European legislation to regulate this sensitive matter, which has such a strong influence on public opinion and therefore also on the principle of popular sovereignty – which underpins the European Union and not just the Italian Republic – and on the ways in which this principle is exercised.

It should no longer be possible for anyone to invoke the sacrosanct rights of the popular majority to justify threats to freedom of the press in what was, until recently, a situation of disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant – whether in Italy or in Portugal, as we were reminded earlier – because this undermines the foundations of the rules of coexistence on which the Union is based. This is why there is an urgent need for a directive against concentrations in the field of information that will regulate the dealings of those who are involved in politics and, at the same time, control very important media.

Sylvie Goulard (ALDE). – (FR) Madam President, I would like quickly to point out that the subject of this debate – and the speeches by Mrs Reding and Mr Daul have clearly shown this – is our idea of Europe. It is not a Member State that we are targeting; it is the question of knowing whether we are applying the treaties, whether we are applying the European Convention on Human Rights signed in Rome in 1950, and whether we are applying Article 6 of the Treaty.

Mr Daul, when you quote Mr Napolitano, quote him in full. The President of the Italian Republic pointed out that legal remedies existed and mentioned, in his speech, Article 7 of the treaties. This article enables us today, legally, without emotion, to address the issue of the risk of a violation of human rights within a Member State – Italy today, another country tomorrow.

The final very important point is that, in every country in the world, dictators and people who want to undermine human rights hide behind sovereignty. For me, Europe is the continent of the universality of human rights. If we fail to admit that we, who sit in the same Parliament, have the right, the duty to see what is happening in one of the Member States, how can we tell dictatorships in distant countries that we defend a universal idea, which is so very important for the defence of women's rights, in particular?

Fiorello Provera (EFD). – (IT) Madam President, it is strange that, when we talk in this House about freedom of expression in Italy, we continually exceed the speaking time, and thus indirectly censor the next speaker. I shall therefore try to keep strictly to the speaking time allocated to me.

I have to say that I would consider it far more appropriate to hold this debate in the Italian Parliament than in the Parliament of Brussels, unless – as someone has already stated – it were our intention to debate freedom of the press in general, that is, within the context of the European continent. Leaving opinions aside, however, I believe that it is worth mentioning some data already presented previously by Mr Speroni and on which we should reflect.

I can confirm that, of 455 sentences handed down by the European Court of Human Rights for infringement of Article 10 on freedom of expression, 29 relate to France, 28 to the United Kingdom, 15 to Greece, 10 to Romania, 8 to Poland and only 7 to Italy. I would ask you to reflect on this data.

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) I do not blame anyone who is following this debate for thinking that this is not the European Parliament, but the Italian Parliament. Yet this is not the Italian Parliament and therefore it is not the right place to carry out these essentially national political debates. We are all aware of the Italian Prime Minister's colourful character. However, this is not the issue here. The issue is whether we, as a European institution, have the competence to take decisions in these matters. The answer to that is clear. Commissioner Reding gave it to us today, when she said that these issues did not fall under European competence and that we cannot assume a role that is not ours to take on.

Therefore, since this issue does not fall under our competence, it must be discussed and decided upon on at national level. If we take on powers that do not belong to us, and if we interfere in issues that do not fall under our competence, then we will be undermining rather than strengthening our legitimacy. We would be undermining the institution that we represent and we would be widening, rather than closing, the distance between us and our citizens. If we want to gain the respect of our citizens, then we have to begin by respecting the limits of our competences.

Maria Badia i Cutchet (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, the European Union has a duty to guarantee the pluralism of the media. The debate on freedom of the press concerns the pluralism of ownership of communication media, their structure and procedures for the appointment of their heads, relations between politics, business and the media themselves, and access for citizens to different opinions. I believe that you

will agree with me that the situation of the media in Italy, which is the issue concerning us today, does not fulfil the basic rules required to guarantee freedom of the press in that country.

We therefore ask the Commission to respond to the requests made by this Parliament in recent years and to put forward a definition of specific criteria to evaluate possible infringements of those rights and freedoms in each of the Member States.

Our aim, let there be no doubt about it, is to protect citizens' rights to receive information of different kinds, just as journalists have the right to report freely because, as the demonstrators said last Saturday, information gives us more freedom.

Sarah Ludford (ALDE). – Madam President, it is surely not a coincidence that last week, the British Conservatives won the support of Rupert Murdoch and yesterday they voted to suppress this debate on press freedom. While the new ex-Communist Member States have made great progress towards a free press, the media domination enjoyed by Silvio Berlusconi would have made Erich Honecker green with envy.

But the threats, intimidation and abuse that Berlusconi is directing not only at the press but also at the President and judges go far beyond a purely national issue: this is a major European concern. Commissioner Reding very strangely said that we should not use the EU institutions to solve national problems. So why do we have any European treaties and laws, including those on the requirement of fundamental rights and the rule of law?

There is, in fact, a clear legal competence for the EU to act to uphold freedom of expression and fundamental rights in general. That legal basis exists and must be complemented by legislation on media diversity and pluralism. The passivity of the Commissioner is deeply disappointing.

Salvatore Iacolino (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, in Italy Article 21 of the Constitution and Article 3 of Law No 102 of 2004 define the scope of press freedom and set its limits: the press must be objective, thorough, fair and impartial, always safeguarding human dignity, in line with the principles laid down by the European Union. In the Internet and digital age, in which new newspapers continue to be launched, the public service is showcasing programmes that are openly hostile to the Head of Government, while the press and the media are horrified by the action for damages being brought by Silvio Berlusconi against two newspapers.

In reality, 1 100 radio stations, 162 newspapers and several hundred private television stations would not be enough to guarantee the plurality of the media, which are supposedly threatened by Silvio Berlusconi's initiative. One is left with the suspicion that once a particular media power becomes censorial, it has ambitions to become a political power itself. In other parts of the world, in the meantime, the same system is in operation as influential newspapers such as *El País*, *The Sun* and *Tarin* seem to be quickly changing their political stripe.

Yet the Italian left, rather than adopting its own political strategy, is relying on elements of the national federation of journalists to exhibit the most disloyal and obstinate anti-democratic assault on the government in office – through a series of orchestrated actions on this occasion. Nonetheless, the citizens continue to be highly supportive of the Prime Minister, who was freely chosen by the Italian population, and trust that the European Parliament will be able to confirm – as it did in 2004 – that freedom of the press is a recognised and well-established asset.

Rita Borsellino (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it is not my intention, nor that of my group – which supported and wanted this debate – to transfer Italian internal political diatribes to the European domain. The issue of freedom of information concerns us all: it concerns the European Union, which can and must regulate the matter at Community level, so as to resist political and economic conditioning and to guarantee true pluralism of information.

The Italian anomaly, where the Prime Minister is also the owner of some of the most important private networks, lies precisely in the existence of a dangerous link between the media and political and economic powers. It is precisely for this reason that we are calling for a European legislative measure, a measure that – far from being an anti-Italian act – will help to safeguard pluralism of information, preventing concentrations and conflicts of interest. We therefore call on the Commission today to intervene as quickly as possible – as this Parliament has already requested in the past – in order to equip the European Union with common rules for safeguarding freedom of information for all European citizens.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – Madam President, I have to confess I was rather shocked by the statement of Commissioner Reding because, indeed, the Member States are primarily responsible for ensuring respect for democracy and fundamental rights. But you are wrong if you say that the EU has no role to play here.

First of all, there is Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union, which reads: 'The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.' And to prove that that was not just a hollow statement, the European Union furnished itself with Article 7 – the legal instrument to enforce Article 6.

Secondly, Mrs Reding, when we are negotiating with candidate states, we insist that they apply the highest standards of press freedom, otherwise they cannot join the European Union. This demand has been laid down in the Copenhagen criteria – so why do we apply different standards to candidate states from those applied to current Member States, Commissioner Reding? There are other countries where there are violations of press freedom or freedom of speech, such as the Czech Republic, which has just passed a law restricting the freedom of the press, or Ireland, which has passed a draconian blasphemy law. Commissioner Reding, I conclude by saying that if we are serious about being a Community of values, then the European Commission needs to act.

János Áder (PPE). – (HU) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, we heard Mr Verhofstadt telling us an hour ago that we must join together to protect the values of freedom, and I have to tell you that I agree with him. Freedom of speech is an important fundamental right. This has been the view voiced in the debate so far. I also agree and firmly believe that there is not a single Italian politician in the Chamber who would wish to restrict the freedom of speech.

While listening to the debate, two questions occurred to me. Why do socialist and liberal MEPs feel it is important to protect certain fundamental political rights only in the case of certain rights and only on certain occasions? Is the right to free assembly an important fundamental right? Is it as important a fundamental right as freedom of speech? It certainly is. Yet, three years ago, you made no protests when the socialist government in Hungary broke up a crowd which had gathered to celebrate the 1956 revolution.

Is the right to use your own language an important fundamental right? Is it as important a fundamental right as freedom of speech? It certainly is important. Yet once again, you make no protest when the authorities in Slovakia, a European Union Member State, want to limit the right of minorities to use their own language.

Is the protection of personal privacy an important fundamental right? It definitely is an important fundamental right. I believe that everyone – be it the Italian Prime Minister or anyone else – has the right and must have the right to bring legal proceedings against false accusations and slander.

Freedom of the press is indeed an important right, but why have you kept quiet for the last 20 years when it was obvious that in the former socialist countries, the media was concentrated, to a very large extent, in the hands of the former Communist parties? All I ask of you is not to employ double standards.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I am aware that, on 30 September, the Commission presented a study on the indicators of media pluralism in the Member States. However, in 2008, this House adopted a report by Marianne Mikko in which the European Commission and the Member States were asked to safeguard, and I quote verbatim, 'the multiplicity of opinions in the media, to guarantee the pluralism of information, to ensure that all EU citizens can access free and diversified media'.

Even earlier, in 2004, Parliament adopted a report by Mrs Boogerd-Quaak on the risks of violation, in the EU, of freedom of expression and information. In this report, the Commission was asked to submit a communication on the safeguarding of media pluralism in all the Member States. To date, the Commission has still not given clear responses to Parliament's requests.

You will notice, Commissioner, that I have mentioned neither my country nor its Prime Minister. However, I, as a European citizen, am asking you in this House what the Commission intends to do at European level to ensure that media pluralism is guaranteed in all the Member States.

Clemente Mastella (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the motion against the alleged attack on press freedom in Italy reflects the choice, I feel, of a politically oblique and unsound path. Moreover, some of the strong words, tinged with anger and a touch of hatred, seem to me to have clearly got out of hand. It is very strange, however, that this decline (or alleged decline) in democracy in Italy should arise only now and in such a striking fashion, given that the centre-right, but also the centre-left, governments – of which I too have been part – have taken turns in governing my country.

If this wall of illiberality and anti-democracy really does exist in Italy, why, in so many years of left-wing government, has it never been brought down? Are we talking about negligence, reticence, convenience, or – as seems far more logical to me – the simple observation that Italy's standards of democracy are in line with those of the West and of Europe?

If we really do want, as an exceptional measure – such as the one, I apologise to Mrs Serracchiani, used in this case, namely that of discussing one country and not Europe – to ascertain the truth about the health of democracy within our country, then we should ask the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, respectfully as an institution, whether he feels that he is the President of a country in which pluralism of information is floundering, freedom is in a tailspin and the tide of democracy is going out. However, I do not believe that, were the situation thus, President Napolitano would refrain from denouncing such a state of affairs, faithful as he is to his prerogatives as guarantor of our Constitution.

Since the issue does, however – ladies and gentlemen of the left, and I am sorry to say it – touch on Italian political matters in a very provincial way, taking on an artificially European, and now domestic, dimension, it must be pointed out that, as long as the Italian left, which was once so much more powerful and substantial, allows itself to be led politically by comedians and demagogues, it will become increasingly distanced from power. I do not believe that Woody Allen dictates to President Obama the line he should take.

Anni Podimata (S&D). – (EL) Madam President, Commissioner, as a former journalist, I too never imagined that today, 50 years after we started building Europe and shortly before the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, we would be debating certain basic principles and values on which the European Union has been built and founded.

Values such as independence of the press, pluralism of the media, freedom of speech for everyone, especially journalists, equality for everyone before the law or even, if you like, the basic principle of the division of powers. Is there division of powers when the Prime Minister of a country, in other words, the highest executive authority, holds and controls most of the media in his country and prosecutes the rest?

What is happening in Italy is not an Italian issue, it is a European issue, because the very credibility of the European Union is at risk when it controls and judges infringements of fundamental principles and rights in third countries and tolerates infringement of those same values and principles in its own back yard.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, many of you will have read 'The Trial' by Kafka: it is a fictional work but it is what is happening today in my country, a country of great democratic traditions, with a government elected by the sovereign people, but in which an attempt is being made to undermine the democratic vote with an historically unprecedented attack by the media and the courts.

We are debating freedom of information, when 72% of the press is against the government and Prime Minister Berlusconi. 70% of the legal actions brought against the newspapers were brought by the leaders of the left, with an alleged claim for damages amounting to EUR 312 million of the EUR 486 million in total that has been claimed since 1994. That equates to EUR 32 million per year. This amounts to a form of additional financing through the courts.

To you, ladies and gentlemen, who represent Europe's democracies, we say and we maintain that, in Italy, the power of the courts and the media is crushing the will of the sovereign people in the name of partisan, class-related political interests. Democracy in Italy is therefore at risk if the government is brought down. The main person to subvert this concept, from a semantic point of view, is called Antonio Di Pietro. To conclude, I would like to thank Commissioner Reding for her great sense of balance and democracy; she has drafted an intelligent and accurate report.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D). – (RO) Freedom of the press is never given adequate protection against abuse. Every time a State President or Prime Minister of a European Union Member State attacks journalists, even if only because they disagree with them, the European Commission, European Parliament and everyone of us must respond.

In Italy a Prime Minister is attempting to intimidate the opposition press by every means available. In Romania, a president is attempting to discredit the press and journalists criticising him. In both cases, we are talking about excesses from certain politicians who regard themselves as being above the law. In Romania we have, according to the latest information, a president who not only insults, deceives and slanders journalists, but who also commits other abuses of authority which, on the eve of the presidential elections, seems to be used

for any purpose, including breaking the law, in order to help himself, as the current Head of State, gain re-election.

This is exactly why I am calling on the European Commission, just as I did on 23 September, to publicly condemn this behaviour from both the President of Romania and the Italian Prime Minister.

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to confirm that, in Italy, freedom of the press does exist and is stronger than ever. Those are the words of a great journalist, Giampaolo Pansa, who, for many years, for decades, was one of the most prestigious names writing for the newspaper *La Repubblica*, part of the *Espresso-Repubblica* group, from which he subsequently had to resign because the group's management accused him of revisionism, which in Italy, as you know, is one of the most serious crimes by far, when it is perpetrated by the dominant intelligentsia, by the dominant culture in Italy, which is completely left-wing: just look at the primaries of the Democratic Party, where everyone from bankers to all of the most important actors, directors and journalists from our country stand in line.

However, freedom of information does not mean freedom to insult or to defame; except that the right to a fair hearing is always granted to the left: if Mr Prodi sues, it is okay; if Mr D'Alema sues, it is okay; if Mr Di Pietro sues, it is okay. Mr Di Pietro is the record-breaker – incidentally, the judiciary sues the press more than politicians do – as, according to information published in *La Repubblica*, he has filed 357 complaints, and has already received EUR 700 000 in damages. We have heard the information supplied by our fellow Members. To conclude, if there is a realignment problem – and I believe that this problem exists in Italy – the only political party that has the right to invoke it is the centre-right.

Licia Ronzulli (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in 2008, the Berlusconi Government granted a total of EUR 206 million in direct contributions to the press and to radio and television stations. As luck would have it, most of those millions went to the four main left-wing newspapers.

Freedom of the press in Italy has, in the Berlusconi Government, the most generous of backers. The left, in Italy and throughout Europe, has launched a campaign claiming that freedom of the press is under threat, a campaign based on scandalous fabrications and brazen lies. And, inevitably – as luck would have it here too – it launched this campaign only after Prime Minister Berlusconi had made a legitimate claim for compensation from two left-wing newspapers that had defamed him, accusing him of disgraceful behaviour, accusations based on complete fabrications that are beneath any form of journalism worth its salt.

Prime Minister Berlusconi is the first to say that freedom of the press is very important, but the freedom to insult, to deceive, to defame and to slander is something altogether different. In this case, every citizen – including, therefore, Prime Minister Berlusconi – has the right to be able to defend himself using the democratic means at his disposal, by asking a civil court to consider the attacks made against him in writing, something which, I would add, other leaders of the left have also done.

Victor Boștinăru (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, this is not only a debate among Italians: this debate is, first and foremost, about Europe.

(RO) Mr Berlusconi is certainly not the only example of someone breaching the basic regulations governing the mass media. Traian Băsescu frequently behaves in an aggressive, undemocratic manner and intimidates the mass media by using language which I cannot repeat here in the European Parliament.

The European Charter on Freedom of the Press will just become another nice piece of paper if Europe's Heads of State or Government want to carry on behaving in this way. We, the European Union, will be made to look a laughing stock, analysing and criticising the freedom of information in various countries in Asia and Africa, while these freedoms are not protected and respected in the European Union.

I therefore propose combating this monopoly situation with the means provided by and the authority of the Commission, along with the enforcement of the Charter on Freedom of the Press, backed up by European authority.

Cecilia Wikström (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, a long time ago, the well-known Swedish writer August Strindberg said: 'You have power, I have words, I have words in my power.' However, this is not the case today for the writers and journalists in Italy who are systematically denied the right to express themselves freely.

Over the last three years, 200 journalists have been threatened on account of what they have written. What happens in Italy concerns us all, however. The freedom to speak, write and to have your words published freely is a fundamental right of all 500 million European citizens.

What is happening in Italy shows that the freedom of speech is sometimes more dangerous than weapons to a regime that seizes power over the freedom of speech. Today, Parliament has a unique opportunity to bring out and reveal our most positive attributes. Here we are showing that fundamental freedoms are at stake. Italy's concerns are also our own.

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, today's debate really is incredible, because in Italy freedom of information is a guaranteed and recognised constitutional right. Others before me have provided information on the number and the political bias of the newspapers published in Italy.

For the benefit of the non-Italian Members, I will take the liberty of doing a press review. These are some of the independent newspapers that I bought yesterday at the airport: this is *Il Manifesto*, a communist newspaper; this is *L'Unità*, a newspaper founded by Antonio Gramsci, of the Democratic Party-Democratic Party of the Left; and this is *L'Europa*, the newspaper of the Margherita party, which has joined the Democratic Party. Then, the Democratic Party also has a D'Alema-Letta faction, which has its own newspaper, *Il Riformista*. Then there is the Refoundation Party, which has its own newspaper, *Liberazione*. Last year Refoundation split, and the breakaway party founded its own newspaper, *L'Altro*.

Lastly, there is the political subject of this debate: *Il Fatto quotidiano*. Do you know to whom this newspaper refers? It refers to Mr Di Pietro's party, which is the driving force behind this debate today. This is a party that is asserting in this House that there is no freedom of information, when it founded a newspaper ten days ago in Italy.

To conclude, Madam President, it is as though I were here telling you that in Italy there is famine and hunger, when last weekend, I was in my country at the sausage festival eating roast meat and drinking wine. This is the paradox of a left that owns so many newspapers but has no readers or votes. It will have to come up with more serious arguments if it wants to win them back.

Mary Honeyball (S&D). – Madam President, I too would like to join the calls for a European directive on freedom of information, freedom of the press and media pluralism. Although this has been a debate about freedom of information in Italy, as other speakers have said, there are serious issues in other countries in the European Union.

One of these is the United Kingdom. Rupert Murdoch has already been mentioned, and one of the reasons I believe we need this directive is because of Rupert Murdoch. Rupert Murdoch is not a Head of State but he is an international media mogul with his own very particular agenda. He is not democratic and we need to legislate for the likes of Rupert Murdoch as well as for the likes of Silvio Berlusconi.

David Casa (PPE). – (MT) I come from Malta and therefore, as you can imagine, Italy is a neighbouring country we have been following for many years. In matters relating to freedom of expression, my country also looks to Italy because it is a clear example of democracy. Therefore, to delve into this internal issue, which is what the Italian socialists want, is, in my opinion, a shameful form of politics for their country. I would never have thought that the Italians would ever have resorted to attacking their country in this Parliament in such an unjust fashion. I think I can understand better why the Italians do not trust the Left to govern in Italy for more than a few months, the reason being that upon analysing this party's policy it becomes clear that it can only suit those who want to attack the very concept of democracy, which is why I believe that they should have heeded the Italian President, and from here I would like to greet him, when he said that this debate has no place within this Parliament, but should be dealt with within the Italian Parliament.

Stanimir Ilchev (ALDE). – (BG) Thank you, Madam President. I will speak in the language of one of the countries criticised in this chamber today, Bulgaria. If I were a journalist in Bulgaria at the moment, as I once was, I would probably choose one of the two diametrically opposed statements made as a heading on the front page of any newspaper. One of them is that we must not turn this House into a sounding board, let alone a supreme court of appeal. The other one, made by a speaker from the Socialist group, advises us not to treat this House like a museum containing old objects that must not be moved.

I believe that the truth lies somewhere in between and is reflected in the proposal made by Mr Verhofstadt about drafting a directive which must create a more modern and democratic system for regulating all the

matters discussed today on the subject of media freedom and pluralism. However, apart from dealing with the issues of pluralism and freedom, and the protection of journalists, this directive must include and place particularly strong emphasis, in actual fact, on the deconcentration of media resources, including within national media systems.

Viviane Reding, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I think that this debate was very important because it made very clear that there is a strong agreement in this House, a strong agreement that the freedom of the press does not have an if or a when, it is the basis of our European Union. We have to defend it, it is a fundamental value, we have to speak up when it is not honoured and we have to act if there is a problem to be solved.

(The President requested silence in the Chamber)

There is also an agreement in this House that the freedom of the media is a problem to be looked at in all Member States. Many of you have not been in this House before so I will just recall the action of the European journalists to set up a European Charter on Freedom of the Press. That was drawn up in order to help mainly the journalists in the new Member States and they had asked for this help from the journalistic community.

I just want to recall this, because it has been said in this House that there are problems with public television in many of our Member States. I recall having gone to one of those Member States – it was Hungary – to reinforce the case for saving public television, and I think that that should be done in all Member States when there is a problem.

It is for this reason that we have voted in the new Television Without Frontiers Directive, with the help of the Parliament, for the establishment of independent media authorities in all of our Member States. I can assure this House that whenever there is a problem in establishing these independent media authorities, the Commission will act.

Now where there is a disagreement in this House is on how to bring together EU competences with media policies. I think that many Members did not hear my introductory statements where I quoted from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is very clear. I also quoted Article 51(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which also states very clearly when the charter is to be implemented and the rules for implementing the charter. So I think that everybody can read this and recall it.

Unfortunately, nobody is listening now, although this is very important.

(The President again requested silence)

In my introductory speech, I also underlined the very clear actions, the concrete examples of where the EU can act and has acted, and I underlined the problems which have to be solved at national level. The constitutional court of Italy, which acted yesterday, has clearly shown what that means.

Now there have been several clear demands by this House and I would like to reply to these if the House would permit and listen.

(The President once more requested silence)

There is the demand by this House to go for the media pluralism approach which has been promised. The work on media pluralism has already made substantial progress and we have published the second step with the risk indicators on media pluralism. Maybe many parliamentarians have not seen these. They are on the Internet; they can be looked at and they are a very important element in being able to conduct this objective work on media pluralism which Parliament has called for.

I must say that I was very disappointed because we had a public workshop on this and not a single parliamentarian turned up to participate in the workshop. Well, the risk indicators have been published now and they can be looked at. They will be the basis for our future work.

Second question: why does the Commission not activate Article 7 of the EU Treaty in the case of Italy? First of all, Article 7 is a very exceptional provision. So far, it has never been activated by the EU institutions. This clause would apply only if there were a complete breakdown of national jurisdictional orders and fundamental rights systems in a given Member State. I do not think that we have reached such a situation in any of our Member States. But – and it is very interesting – the article states that the European Parliament itself has the possibility to activate Article 7 of the EU Treaty. So I call on the European Parliament, if it really thinks there is sufficient proof, to activate Article 7 of the EU Treaty.

Third question: many parliamentarians from all political parties – and I think there is relative unanimity in this House – have asked for an EU directive on media pluralism and media concentration.

(The President once more requested silence)

This is a fundamental question that has to be discussed in depth. You might recall that the European Commission started to work on the draft for such a directive in the 1990s and you will also recall that all Member States, without exception, were against such a directive at that time because it was considered to be outside the competences of the EU.

Now, maybe the situation has changed today and there will be a large majority of Member States thinking this can enter into the competences of the EU. Of course, it would be possible to arrive at such a very generous interpretation of the Treaty, to allow the EU to tackle the matter. But, before even starting to think about this, the Commission would need to have the strong support of the whole European Parliament. And I would like the European Parliament to identify clearly which internal market problems it wants to be tackled with such a directive.

You know that I personally am not the kind of Commissioner who has a problem in regulating. I have, in the last five years, regulated when it was necessary. But to do this we need clear evidence about the questions we want to answer. Would legislation solve the problems you all have in mind today? Could we justify it under existing EU competences? Is there a clear cross-border dimension? Is there a clear internal market dimension because – remember – the legislation which we have already put on the table was all on the internal market legal basis.

All this would need to be clarified before we could start a legislative process. So I invite Parliament to discuss this seriously and I invite Parliament to respond to this question in an own-initiative report adopted by a majority of Members. Then the Commission will take that a step forward.

In the meantime, the Commission has done its homework by establishing the risk indicators that will help us to analyse this whole problem in all Member States on an objective basis. I think, in the end, that is what the Parliament wants. That is also what the other institution wants, because we do not want political usage of our basic freedoms. We want these freedoms to be a right; we want these freedoms to be a basic value and to be treated as such.

(Applause)

President. – Commissioner, please accept my apologies on behalf of the House for the noise during your speech in response to the Members' comments.

Martin Schulz (S&D). – *(DE)* Madam President, before I make my personal observations, I would like to start by raising a point of order. I do not believe that any member of the Commission or the Council, or even of this very House, should be expected to address the House in the conditions that Mrs Reding faced just now. It is just not acceptable!

(Applause)

I therefore ask the Bureau to consider how we can bring an end to this dishonourable state of affairs whereby, during the final stages of debates and during ongoing statements, conversations can be held here, such as between Vice-President Vidal-Quadras and his former colleague up there, who are interested in absolutely nothing other than their bilateral relations. I do not believe that that is acceptable. I would ask the Bureau again to give some consideration to this.

I would now like to make a comment on something that Mr Weber said. Mr Weber addressed me personally in the debate on the freedom of the press in Italy and brought up the media interests of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD).

(Uproar)

As a Member of this House, but also a member of the executive of my party, I would like to say that I have some sympathy for Mr Weber. Anyone who has lost as many votes as the Christian Social Union (CSU) in Bavaria and my party needs to ensure that he attracts attention.

(Uproar)

I would just like to point out that the media interests of the SPD in their present form are the result of the restitution of the German media after its expropriation by the Nazis and by the Communists in the GDR. We German Social Democrats are proud of our media interests!

Joseph Daul (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, I have just one more point to raise, which concerns the whole of Parliament: on Tuesday 18 September, upon leaving the European Parliament at 23.00, Mrs Niebler was brutally attacked; she was thrown to the floor. She had her telephone, her money, her credit cards and all her papers stolen. What is more serious is that a Belgian restaurant owner came to her aid and called the ambulance and the police. Half an hour later, the ambulance arrived to treat Mrs Niebler. Very well. Half an hour after that, the police were still not there. We are still waiting for them. I therefore call on the President to intervene here, in Parliament, because this is now the third attack that the police have failed to follow up. One's safety is not guaranteed in this city...

(Applause)

... nor are responses from the authorities. I call for very strong intervention from the President of Parliament to obtain a response concerning this attack.

(Applause)

President. – Mr Daul, unfortunately, as you said, there have been episodes of this kind on numerous occasions, and therefore I obviously regard them as unacceptable.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the second October part-session.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), in writing. – (FR) It is extremely difficult for an MEP to see a democracy such as Italy have the finger pointed at it, as this debate is intended to do. Freedom of the press is a fundamental freedom enshrined in Article 21 of the Italian Constitution. In Italy, there are private and public newspapers reflecting all political tendencies.

Out of respect for thousands of people who suffer oppression and a lack of free expression in many countries in the world, it is obscene to describe the Italian regime as a freedom-destroying regime. Moreover, one of the most fundamental characteristics of any constitutional state is that they offer access to the courts to any citizen who feels wronged. Thus, the fact that a Prime Minister of the Republic who has been slandered in national newspapers has chosen the legal route to attack his detractors, and not parallel routes characteristic of undemocratic regimes, confirms the good health of Italian democracy.

Lastly, it is crucial to point out that the European Parliament must not become a chamber in which contentious national issues that have no connection with Community competences are settled. National debates must be settled at national level!

Iosif Matula (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Freedom of expression is enshrined among the democratic criteria which we have laid as the foundation of the European Union. Every Member State must assume its responsibility and comply with the Copenhagen criteria, including in the political domain. However, I believe that the European institutions must not be used, in any manner or form, as a forum for settling internal political disputes. We are discussing today matters that relate to the domestic policy of a Member State, as long as it has operational democratic institutions. On a personal note, I give my unreserved support to absolute freedom of the press. At the same time, this freedom comes with the utmost responsibility for every editorial team to provide the public with correct information. Calls have been made in this Chamber for tighter regulations governing the concentration of media ownership and pluralism at Community level. However, we must not forget that Member States have voiced their opposition to such a directive because it does not come under the EU's jurisdiction. The European Commission has published, nevertheless, a list of media pluralism indicators based on an independent study. I believe that it is important for us to give greater importance to these criteria and to use them as a starting point for a future directive in this area. It is also important for us to try to find solutions instead of making accusations.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), in writing. – (IT) To declare that freedom of information is denied in Italy is an instrumental and opportunistic offence against one of the West's greatest democracies. Freedom of information is denied in those countries in which the dictatorial regimes prevent their subjects from expanding their

knowledge of daily events by choosing what they believe to be the most authoritative source. The Internet today has the virtue, in traditionally democratic countries such as Italy, of demolishing every political, geographical, economic and social barrier to information. In certain countries, however, the Internet is filtered, and many websites, considered anti-government, are banned. There, civil rights, such as freedom of expression, of marriage and of demonstration, rights of which we in the West do not even realise the importance any more because we are used to them, are not even vaguely close to the concept of inalienability guaranteed by our Constitution because, quite simply, they do not exist. The European Parliament must be a place of growth, of debate and of exchanges of best practice among the Member States. It cannot be reduced to an elite theatre set where first-night performances of any old small provincial theatre production are put on free of charge. If the debate on freedom of the press, in Europe, must be held at the European Parliament, then so be it, but it should be constructive and worthy of the prestigious institution of which we are proud to be part.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) 'Freedom of the press is essential to a democratic society. To uphold and protect it, and to respect its diversity and its political, social and cultural missions, is the mandate of all governments.' This is Article 1 of the European Charter on Freedom of the Press. Mr Berlusconi seems not only to be defying one of the fundamental values of a democratic society, but also to be using the influence he has to manipulate public opinion. In Italy, as well as other countries, a large proportion of newspapers are owned by individuals controlled by certain politicians who lay down management policy for them and from which they cannot deviate. In other countries, the government uses taxpayers' money to finance newspapers used for its own benefit. In the European Union, which champions democracy and promotes democratic values throughout the world, we must not allow restrictions on freedom of the press. This is why I am calling on the European Commission to propose in the near future a directive on freedom of the press, intended, in particular, to limit political interference in the mass media and to prevent any monopoly being established in this area.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

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

7. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

7.1. Mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund: Italy, the Abruzzo earthquake (A7-0021/2009, Reimer Böge) (vote)

7.2. Prevention and settlement of conflicts of exercise of jurisdiction in criminal proceedings (A7-0011/2009, Renate Weber) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Renate Weber (ALDE). – Madam President, in Amendment 6 to recital 18, the following will be added at the end of the sentence: 'unless strictly necessary for the prevention and settlement of conflicts of jurisdiction in the application of this Framework Decision'.

(The oral amendment was accepted)

7.3. Appointments to the special committee on the financial, economic and social crisis (vote)

7.4. G20 Summit in Pittsburgh (24-25 September) (vote)

– *Before the vote on Amendment 13:*

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, we would like to introduce the following oral amendment to Amendment 13: ‘Urges the development of country-by-country reporting that provides a comprehensive view of each parent company of a group for investors, stakeholders and tax authorities, thereby facilitating a more effective and transparent international overview of tax-led decisions’.

(The oral amendment was accepted; amendment 13 was then rejected)

7.5. The effects of the global financial and economic crisis on developing countries and on development cooperation(vote)

President. – That concludes the vote.

8. Explanations of vote

- Oral explanations of vote:

- Report: Renate Weber (A7-0011/2009)

Jan Březina (PPE). – (CS) Madam President, the Czech Republic was among those initiating the submission of the draft Council Framework Decision on prevention and settlement of conflicts of exercise of jurisdiction in criminal proceedings, and this shows that the Czech Republic attaches considerable importance to judicial cooperation. In view of the sensitivity of the issue, however, it is necessary to ensure that this cooperation operates within the bounds of the authority vested in the European Union by the founding treaty. That is happening in this case. The weak point, on the other hand, is a relatively pronounced generality, for example, in the absence of deadlines for a response from a requested authority and the lack of criteria for determining the most suitable judicial authority for handling criminal proceedings. Another fly in the ointment is the poor integration with Eurojust, which should have been the focus of attention. As the body for European cooperation in judicial matters, there is, lying dormant, a far greater potential for Eurojust than the role it has in the draft framework decision, which does not even stipulate a requirement to inform Eurojust when resolving issues of criminal prosecution of cross-border crimes in a single Member State.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Madam President, I voted against this report, but not because I oppose the exchange of information between national authorities on criminal proceedings. It is a good idea to find out whether there are parallel ongoing proceedings for the same facts in other Member States.

What I do strongly oppose, however, is the federalist tone of various amendments. Take Amendment 3, for example, which explicitly denies each Member State the discretion to decide which authorities are competent to act. I am by no means opposed to Eurojust, but it must not turn into a ‘super-institution’.

- Joint motion for a resolution: G20 Summit in Pittsburgh (24-25 September) (RC-B7-0082/2009)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D). – Madam President, I voted for the resolution. I am glad to see that both Europe and the most powerful countries do not underestimate the seriousness of the situation we are all in and are not looking for a ‘one size fits all’ approach. The crisis has been caused by a number of complex and interrelated factors, and there will be no easy way out.

The global financial crisis also gave us a good opportunity to reconsider our priorities and actions, especially in the long-term management of sustainable economic recovery. We have commitments to and expectations from our citizens to get our economies moving again at full speed with a view to ensuring the effective functioning of capital markets and lending, tackling unemployment and creating jobs, and protecting our people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. This is not going to be easy, but I believe that we are moving in the right direction.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Madam President, we propose very seriously to exacerbate it. The cause of the financial crisis was excessive state intervention: first in the sense that interest rates were deliberately kept too low for too long, a political rather than a market decision – one in which all the central banks were complicit – and then in the sense that, as recently as last year, legislatures were urging lenders to make more cheap loans available.

So the G20 leaders get together and they say ‘What is the solution? More state intervention.’ I suppose, as Mark Twain once observed, that if all that you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. But the

truth is that every action they have taken has, at best, been useless and, at worst, has actively deteriorated our situation: the bail-outs, the nationalisations, the pretence of going after tax havens (by which they in fact mean countries with more competitive tax rates than theirs), and the massive extension of state jurisdiction under the pretext of 'contingency'. And now we want to reform the entire financial system. I will close with the words of my late countryman Mr Justice Asprey: 'Reform? Aren't things bad enough already?'

Lena Ek (ALDE). – Madam President, I have two comments on the recent voting on the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh. I regret, and I think it is deplorable, that there is so little on solving the climate crisis in this resolution and also in the material from the G20 Summit. There is also mention of the Tobin tax, which I think might be a new way of financing both development aid and helping developing countries when it comes to climate issues.

The reason why I did not vote 'yes' to the amendments is because they were phrased in a very old-fashioned way, as though we were having a discussion on the Tobin tax 20 years ago. The modern way of discussing whether this is a new financing source for the United Nations aims at something different, and I hope to come back to this in the Chamber later.

- Motion for a resolution: The effects of the global financial and economic crisis on developing countries and on development cooperation (B7-0078/2009)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D). – Madam President, I gave my support to this resolution as I believe that it is time for all the players to take their responsibilities and to fulfil their commitments to the developing countries. It is true that the global, economic and financial crisis has hit hard even the most developed economies, but we must not forget that it has hit the poorest countries even more. We must bear in mind that the developing countries did not cause the crisis, but they are now the ones bearing a heavy burden.

The implementation of the Millennium Goals is now at serious risk. I very much welcome the acknowledgement of the G20 to take collective responsibility and I am expecting to see those promises turning into real actions.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – Madam President, I supported this report because I think that there is a need for a new paradigm in the world – a new paradigm in which we shift from completely money- and profit-centred decision making to human being- and community-centred decision making, and from the logic of competition to the logic of justice.

I see this report as a seed at least. I am not saying that it fully supports the new paradigm, but it at least contains the seeds of a new paradigm, in particular, in paragraph 2, which states: 'Believes that there is an urgent need for radical policy reform to address the systemic causes of the food and financial crisis by putting in place new democratic, transparent regulations for international trade as well as for the international financial system'.

I do believe, and hope, that we take this very seriously. There are fundamental causes of this crisis, and we really need to look at those causes systematically and radically. We need a radically new paradigm.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE). – (ET) Mr President, I voted in favour of this resolution. The global financial and economic crisis has indeed affected all countries, but it has had a particularly devastating effect on the poorest. The crisis has negatively influenced all of their sources of financing, and they are unable to maintain what they have achieved without foreign assistance.

The crisis has threatened the millennium objectives set for the year 2015. Therefore I support the plan to implement, earlier than had been planned, the EUR 8.8 billion of development aid for budget assistance and rapid measures for agricultural financing, and the proposal to allocate EUR 500 million for social welfare expenditures. I did not support the articles in this resolution concerning the Tobin tax.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Madam President, I voted for the resolution and also for the amendments to bring in the Tobin tax.

This was on grounds of personal consistency, because back in 2002, when I was a member of the Basque Parliament, it adopted a resolution saying that we considered it necessary to tackle the phenomenon of international capital movements, in accordance with their social and economic impact throughout the world, that we should introduce criteria and mechanisms to provide some mechanisms for monitoring and contributing to human development, to overcoming inequalities between peoples and social sectors, and

to environmental balance, and that we had an obligation to set up mechanisms to restrict speculative movements.

In the same way, we believed that we had a duty to contribute to the development of proposals to deal with the democratic control and the social impact of international capital movements. We also laid down and approved the need to establish urgently the so-called 'Tobin tax', which is a tax on international financial transactions earmarked for development aid, as well as to establish democratic mechanisms for regulating the international system.

Several years have now passed since the Basque Parliament adopted that decision, and I am pleased that the European Parliament has adopted a resolution that takes the same line.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Madam President, may I congratulate you on the deft, adroit and sensitive way in which you have exercised the prerogatives of the Chair.

For fifty years, European trade and agricultural policies have caused preventable poverty in the Third World. We have simultaneously excluded produce from countries where often agricultural export is the main generator of revenue and, rubbing in the salt, exported our own surpluses – dumped ineffectively our surpluses – on their markets. Then we have tried to salve our consciences by massive aid programmes which have not served to ameliorate the conditions of those countries but, on the contrary, by breaking the distinction between representation and taxation, have served to retard democratic development across much of the world.

Here is one thing we could do tomorrow that would have an immediate, benign and transformative effect in the countries that we are talking about: we can abolish the common agricultural policy. The best thing is that it would not cost us a penny. On the contrary, our farmers would be better off, our countryside would be better looked after, our taxes would fall and food prices would fall, which would lower inflation and improve the situation of the world economy generally.

And in case you thought I had forgotten, I have not gone soft and still think we need a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty: *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est*.

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) Madam President, the hypocrisy and inconsistency of this House continue to amaze me. On the one hand, this resolution rightly states that it is a shame that the best and most talented people are leaving developing countries, and that this brain drain is harmful to their economy. On the other, there is support across the political spectrum in this House for the EU Blue Card and the European reception centres for legal migration in Africa: the very things that cause and perpetuate this brain drain. After all, experience has shown that 'circular migrants' remain in Europe. Yet there are countless other reasons why I voted against this resolution, such as its plea for more and more EU development assistance. If Europe is to play a role in development cooperation at all, it should be as a coordinator among the Member States and not as a donor.

Edward Scicluna (S&D). – (MT) Much of the work that this Parliament and other governments carry out in this field is in the form of 'fire fighting'. Prevention efforts are made in the light of climate change. However, we also need to work on underdevelopment as a form of prevention. Many of the immigration problems that we face are not political but economical, especially in the Mediterranean, and therefore we have to provide assistance in order to prevent this problem from growing.

- Written explanations of vote:

- **Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0021/2009)**

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the request made by Italy for aid in relation to accessing the European Union Solidarity Fund for rebuilding the Abruzzo region, extensively destroyed by the earthquake in April 2009, based on humanitarian considerations for a country in trouble. Bearing in mind the reason why this instrument exists at European Union level, which is to tackle natural disasters and show solidarity with the regions affected by a disaster, I wish to draw attention to the need for quicker procedures for making the funds requested available to the states affected.

Louis Bontes, Barry Madlener and Laurence J.A.J. Stassen (NI), in writing. – (NL) The Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) is in favour of emergency assistance, but it is for the individual Member States, not the European Union, to provide such assistance.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – In April 2009, an earthquake occurred in Italy that caused a great deal of damage. It is for this reason that the Commission proposed the mobilisation of the ESF in favour of Italy. The events that took place in Italy were tragic indeed. I am therefore in agreement that the mobilisation of the ESF is justified and have voted in favour.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for the Böge report on the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund in favour of Italy because I believe that the European Union must respond, as quickly as possible, to the country's request for help, in order to mitigate the tragic consequences of the earthquake that struck the Italian region of Abruzzo in April 2009, claiming the lives of 300 people and causing extremely significant damage.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As I have had the opportunity to say before, I believe that solidarity between Member States and, in particular, European support for countries that have been the victims of disasters, constitute a clear sign that the European Union is no longer just a free trade area. By adopting special aid instruments, such as the European Union Solidarity Fund, the EU is demonstrating that it is capable of maintaining unity in the face of adversity, in situations that are particularly demanding in human and material terms. I must therefore welcome and express my support, once again, for the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund on this occasion to assist the victims of the earthquake which struck the Italian region of Abruzzo in April 2009.

I would reiterate my wish for the European Union Solidarity Fund not to be used too often – meaning that Europe would not suffer many serious emergencies – but also my desire for its structure and availability to be progressively improved and frequently assessed in order to meet any potential real needs in a way that is quick, not bureaucratic.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The report approves the European Union Solidarity Fund in favour of Italy, following April's earthquake, which claimed the lives of 300 people and caused very significant damage. It is estimated that the total direct damage caused by the earthquake is more than EUR 10 million, and has been classified, in accordance with the Fund's intervention criteria, as a 'major natural disaster' and, as such, falls within the main field of application of the legal basis.

The Commission is, therefore, proposing the mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to the sum of EUR 493 771 159. Let us not forget that the proposed revision of the regulations that this Fund establishes, submitted by the Commission and rejected by Parliament in May 2006, is still pending in Council.

As we see it, it is important, amongst other things, to ensure that regional disasters remain eligible, or even safeguard the possibility of the specificity of the natural disasters suffered in the Mediterranean being recognised and of adapting this Fund – in terms of response times and eligible actions – to the specific needs of natural disasters such as drought and fires.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted today in favour of the Böge report on mobilising the Solidarity Fund for Italy. I welcome the fact that this report was included on the agenda, in spite of the difficulties. Parliament's administrative body must anticipate in the future situations like the one we have today. Technical reasons cannot be used to postpone voting on reports which have serious repercussions for European citizens. The European Commission must review the procedures for mobilising the Solidarity Fund with a view to speeding up the payment of grants. An advance payment system must be set up, based on an immediate initial assessment of the direct losses incurred. The final payment must then be made based on the final calculations of the direct losses and on evidence of the prevention measures adopted as a result of the disaster.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of Amendment 7. I am pleased that services have been organised quickly to hold the vote, and I hope the funds required in Italy are made available as quickly as possible to provide speedy and effective assistance.

Barbara Matera (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I wish to congratulate Parliament on having blocked, at my request yesterday, the vote on mobilisation of the Solidarity Fund for the Abruzzo earthquake, which happened in April, causing very serious human and material loss. There was really no reason to postpone, even for only two weeks, a vote that has such a significant impact on the lives of European citizens in difficulty.

The European Commission carried out the preliminary investigation in no time at all, granting Italy the exact amount it had requested, namely EUR 493 771 159. This could well be the highest amount ever granted to date by this fund. With this vote, Parliament is thus showing full solidarity and unity with the affected

populations. Normally, it takes an average of around 18 months to mobilise this fund. This time, we have reached the consultation stage in Parliament very quickly, considering that the earthquake happened only five months ago. I therefore sincerely hope that the Commission and the Council will make the timescales for the rest of the procedure as short as possible and will ensure that Italy can access the funds by the end of the year.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), in writing. – The effects of the Abruzzo earthquake were devastating and tragic, and the funding which we approved today cannot, of course, compensate for the terrible loss of life or the physical destruction of communities caused by this natural disaster. However, the funding from the EU Solidarity Fund will make a real difference to the region and its long-term recovery, and the existence and effective operation of this fund demonstrates the solidarity between the Member States of the European Union. Programmes and mechanisms to deliver practical measures make us stronger as a union, and better able to cope with crises, whether they be economic downturns or natural disasters. We should continue to support these practical measures to provide assistance to Member States during times of genuine need. Policy enables us to influence and control events, but for those events – such as natural disasters – which go beyond the realm of politics, we can develop these important mechanisms to help us cope with crises.

Rafał Kazimierz Trzaskowski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) In the face of a tragedy in which people have lost their loved ones and, in many cases, all of their possessions, and a beautiful town of great antiquity has been ruined, support for such a proposal is a gesture of plain decency. The EU Solidarity Fund is an example of effective, common EU action in a case when one of its members has been hit by such a tragedy. The EU Solidarity Fund allows fast, emergency aid to be given and is, without doubt, a positive signal to its citizens.

Derek Vaughan (S&D), in writing. – I welcome the positive vote releasing funding for the Abruzzo earthquake victims. Our reaction to natural disasters, such as the devastation we saw in Italy, must go beyond the realm of politics. Acting to help victims of this catastrophe rebuild their lives, homes and futures is surely something that any Member of this Parliament with a shred of humanity will agree on.

The EU Solidarity Fund allows us to act as a community to alleviate misery and suffering. Since it was established, the fund has been used to help people in more than half of EU Member States and over 20 disasters from flooding to forest fires, drought and volcano eruptions. I also note that the people of Wales have been among those to benefit from funding following the terrible floods of 2007.

However, the fund's revenues must be looked at and there is a strong case for allowing the fund to have its own resources so that other projects are not affected by the mobilisation of the fund.

I hope that in some way, this money can work towards the reconstruction not only of buildings but also the communities which were destroyed.

- Report: Renate Weber (A7-0011/2009)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Improving judicial cooperation in criminal proceedings between authorities which have parallel competences is a particularly important measure. If the actions which have led to an offence being committed fall under the jurisdiction of two or more Member States, the criminal proceedings must be conducted under the most suitable jurisdiction, with it being essential to create a common, uniform framework for choosing this jurisdiction in an objective, transparent manner. The unsuccessful application of the *ne bis in idem* principle, which features in the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, violates fundamental rights and runs counter to the EU's objective to create a common space of freedom, security and justice. The report which I voted for underpins the guarantee to respect this principle throughout the entire European judicial area, and not only as part of national proceedings. This is why I welcome the adoption of this report during yesterday's session.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) I voted for this report, as matters of conflicts of jurisdiction must be settled as effectively as possible by striving for consensus. We should be pleased that the *ne bis in idem* principle is ensured in the area of states' courts. It is regrettable that the report does not lay down methods of settling conflicts of competency, determining which state should exercise jurisdiction. The role of Eurojust is also not clearly defined. However, this report is a stimulus to strive for further important decisions in the areas of citizens' freedom, justice and home affairs.

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – In a further globalised world and a situation in which there exist 27 Member States in the EU, the possibility of there being some conflict in jurisdiction is great and could cause difficulty. Hence, I have voted in the affirmative.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe that it is essential to make criminal proceedings more efficient, while the correct administration of justice must be ensured. This framework decision will contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts of jurisdiction, ensure that proceedings are started before the most appropriate jurisdiction, and make the choice of criminal jurisdiction more transparent and objective in situations in which the events are covered by the jurisdiction of more than one Member State.

I hope that, in this way, parallel and unnecessary criminal proceedings may be prevented, without, however, leading to increased bureaucracy when dealing with cases in which more appropriate options are quickly available. For example, in cases where more flexible instruments or agreements have already been put in place by Member States, these must take precedence. In fact, the existence of situations in which the same people may be subject to parallel criminal processes, relating to the same events and in different Member States, may lead to violations of the *ne bis in idem* principle, which must be effectively applied throughout the European judicial area. I also support the increased involvement of Eurojust from the start of the process.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson and Marita Ulvskog (S&D), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats chose to abstain, as we believe that it is the Member States themselves that should decide which authorities should be considered competent in consultation procedures. We also believe that Eurojust's involvement should be complementary and secondary in relation to the Member States and that the agency's mandate should not in any way be extended by this decision.

Many points in Parliament's report do, however, improve the proposal for a framework decision. It is important, not just for national authorities, but also, and more especially, for those who are suspected or accused of a crime, that there are clear deadlines, procedural guarantees and other protection mechanisms in place.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Coordinated action by Member States on the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the exercise of jurisdiction in criminal proceedings is essential for more effective justice when conducting proceedings of this type. Therefore, it is desirable to concentrate criminal proceedings that affect various jurisdictions in a single Member State, according to objective criteria and for the sake of the necessary transparency, not only to prevent time and resources being wasted, but also because of the costs involved and because it is essential to increase the consistency and efficiency of proceedings.

Direct contact – that is also as brief as possible – between competent national authorities is therefore essential to determine the competent jurisdiction and the respective transfer of proceedings. In this context, it is important to remember the rights of the accused throughout criminal proceedings, since one of the European Union's basic objectives consists of offering its citizens an area of freedom, safety and justice without internal borders.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We voted against this report because of the strengthening of the role of Eurojust that it aims to establish. From a legal standpoint, the Council's draft framework decision better safeguards the justice of the decisions taken, above all, because it clearly guarantees the *ne bis in idem* principle: that a person may not be sentenced twice by the same criminal proceedings. Despite the rapporteur having recognised this fact, the amendments introduced strengthen the role of Eurojust in areas that are the exclusive jurisdiction of the Member States. In this way, and through its anticipated intervention in proceedings, Eurojust is being set up as a higher authority than the Member States, because their chance to come to an agreement on who has authority over proceedings is being taken away from them.

We do not think that it is acceptable for the justification for all this to be 'waste of time and resources'. The transfer of Member States' jurisdictions in terms of justice, and in other areas, to the EU weakens their sovereignty and is being shown not to serve the interests of the public in the defence of its rights, freedoms, and guarantees. In our opinion, this is another example of exactly that.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) The *ne bis in idem* principle – where the same person cannot be tried twice for the same crime – is a fundamental principle of law within a democracy. I myself am a victim of a violation of this principle in France, as I am still being prosecuted by order of the government in an affair in which I have, nonetheless, been proved totally innocent by the Court of Cassation.

I owe this in particular to the abuse of authority by Mrs Wallis, the rapporteur on my immunity, who has allowed all the tricks in the book to be used to strip me of the protection to which I am entitled, if the rules of justice, of morality and of the case-law of this Parliament were followed.

However, Mrs Weber's report is not aimed at preventing these *ne bis in idem* cases. For that, there is a European convention dating from 2000, which works, it seems, to the satisfaction of practitioners and in compliance with the principles of the rule of law.

No, the Weber report is basically aimed at giving Eurojust, which many would like to see turned into a European public prosecution service, powers to control and to decide on national jurisdictions. That is why we have voted against.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Weber report on the prevention and settlement of conflicts of exercise of jurisdiction in criminal proceedings. Serious criminal activities have an increasingly cross-border nature and the EU has an important role to play in combating such activities. Clearer procedures for the exchange of information in criminal proceedings will enhance cooperation between Member States and improve individual nations' abilities to combat crime. Regard must always be had for fundamental rights and, in my opinion, the Weber report improves upon the proposed framework decision.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – I decided to abstain on the final vote. Although, in the block vote, there are some good amendments on human rights (e.g. Amendments 6 and 15), there are also amendments which move Member State competences to Eurojust (e.g. Amendments 3, 9, 16, 17 and 18). I believe that these should remain with Member States.

Proposal by the Conference of Presidents: Appointments to the special committee on the financial, economic and social crisis

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The creation of the Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis may prove to be essential for preparing the future of the EU. The experience of its members is essential for the pursuit of the tasks and proposals that will be presented by this Special Committee. I believe that the list of members includes members of this House who are respected and very experienced in the various areas affected by the current context of crisis. They will also, therefore, be able to contribute to discussing and presenting relevant measures to correct the faults of the financial system that led to the current situation, making an important contribution to preparing for the possible adoption of properly justified and better legislation in the future.

I also believe that this Committee will have to remain in place beyond the envisaged 12 months and that its composition may be reviewed, in order to allow monitoring and assessment of the measures that will be adopted in the context of the current crisis.

- Joint motion for a resolution: G20 Summit in Pittsburgh (24-25 September) (RCB7-0082/2009)

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I am pleased with the agreements concluded at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh. I am sure that they are a step in the right direction. The immediate priorities must be to ensure the robust and sustainable growth of the real economy, guarantee that the credit and capital markets are functioning well, support and promote employment and protect people from the negative impact of the crisis, paying particular attention to the poorest and most vulnerable.

The rapid increases in the public debt and budget deficits are worrying. The importance of establishing public finances that are sustainable in the long term must be reinforced in order to avoid overloading future generations. Nonetheless, the lack of assessment of the main failures of regulation and supervision that caused the financial crisis is regrettable. It is a priority to understand what happened at that level and thereby avoid repetition of the errors of the past.

Dominique Baudis (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The world is faced with a contradiction that will be difficult to resolve. On the one hand, the economic crisis and its social consequences require urgent measures to restore job-creating growth. That was the agenda of the G20 in Pittsburgh. On the other hand – and this will be the challenge for the Copenhagen conference – it is just as urgent to combat climate change by reducing energy consumption. In other words, we must restart the machine and ensure that that machine pollutes less. Moreover, these two issues cannot be resolved one after the other; they are both urgent. Relaunching economic activity is urgent, and limiting the consequences of economic activity is urgent. At the G20 yesterday, and at the climate-change conference tomorrow, the European Union must tread a narrow path between two equally formidable threats. The European institutions must be established as quickly as possible under the Treaty of Lisbon adopted by the 27 countries of the Union. By 'playing for time' to delay this moment, the Czech President, Mr Klaus, has a big responsibility towards the 500 million citizens of the Union.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) The European Union needs stricter financial market supervision, for which one institution would be accountable (G20). It is important to ensure long-term fiscal stability so that future generations do not have too great a burden and to create more jobs and protect people from the impact of the crisis. It is particularly important to give priority to creating jobs, to ensuring the growth of a large and stable real economy sector, to properly safeguarding capital markets and credit activities, to retaining and stimulating employment, as well as to protecting people from the negative consequences of the crisis, paying particular attention to the poorest and worst affected. Today, we must strengthen social dialogue at all levels by trying to avoid salary reductions and ensure that salaries increase proportionally with productivity growth. The creation of new jobs must be seen as the most important goal.

Pascal Canfin (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The Verts/ALE Group voted in favour of the resolution on the G20 for several reasons, among which: – by referring to the need to develop new indicators which go beyond GDP, the EP gives a clear signal that ‘economic recovery’ must not be based on a ‘business as usual approach’, which is in line with our request to develop a ‘Green New Deal’; – the resolution insists on the need to tackle global imbalances, especially exchange rate imbalances and commodity price volatility within a multilateral framework; – the resolution sends a good signal towards the setting-up of a tax on financial transactions, which was never the case until now; – as regards the financial crisis, the EP makes a strong statement on international coordination that should aim to avoid regulatory arbitrage. It also stresses that the upgrading of prudential rules within the context of the G20 consists of a ‘minimum harmonisation’ approach that must not prevent the EU from applying higher standards; – as regards supervision of the financial sectors, the EP has made a significant move towards an enhanced and more centralised approach on financial market supervision, with the setting up of a single financial supervisory authority being a final objective.

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The G20 has committed itself to reaching an agreement at the Copenhagen Summit and it is essential that the EU continues to play a leading role in the negotiations in order to establish a far-reaching, equitable agreement. The agreement in Copenhagen may drive economic growth, promoting clean technology, and ensuring that new jobs are created in industrialised and developing countries.

The existence of an agreement on financing and technical support for clean, renewal energy and energy efficiency in developing countries is essential in order to obtain a robust agreement in Copenhagen. It is important to define a concrete model in order to maximise the chances of concluding an agreement in Copenhagen. The international agreement must ensure collective reductions of greenhouse gas emissions pursuant to the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Fourth Assessment Report (25-40% for 2020, in relation to 1990) and must establish a long-term reduction for the EU and other industrialised countries of at least 80% by 2050, in relation to 1990.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – The G20 Summit that was held in Pittsburgh on 24 and 25 September was successful in various areas such as discussing the need to address the root causes of the financial crises so as to ensure that such events do not recur in the future. I am in agreement with this and have hence voted in favour of the resolution.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark, Anna Ibrisagic and Alf Svensson (PPE), *in writing*. – (SV) We have today voted in favour of the resolution on the G20. However, we chose to vote against the introduction of a financial transaction tax, as it would counteract poor countries’ capital formation and would hinder the development and growth that has lifted people and countries out of poverty over the last 30 years. We are also opposed to the creation of an anti-cyclical jobs fund at international level, as there is a risk that it will preserve old and obsolete structures, thereby preventing the growth and development of new jobs. It would require the introduction of an international tax and distribution system with no democratic control and with the clear risk of all kinds of corruption. It is important for people affected by the crisis to be able to receive support and help, but this is best handled at national level, not by a bureaucratic international system.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The delegation of the elected representatives of the *Mouvement Démocrate* (Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe – France) welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the G20 conclusions. Through this vote, the European Parliament is reaffirming that: the EU must provide itself with a financial supervision system and a single financial authority; we need to move in the direction of long-term fiscal stability so as not to harm future generations; the immediate priorities must be to create jobs and to protect the citizens against the impact of the crisis. We have voted in favour of Amendments 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13, and regret that the European Parliament did not go further in relation to accounting transparency, the fight against tax havens and environmental commitments (‘New Green

Deal'). We would also reiterate our commitment to a tax on financial transactions based on the model of the Tobin tax. In this respect, we call on the European Parliament to begin discussions on the definition of such a tax.

Frank Engel (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) While we agree with the main guidelines of the European Parliament resolution on the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh – and having endorsed it for that reason – the Luxembourg delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) wishes to express some reservations about elements of this resolution that are unsatisfactory.

Firstly, the Pittsburgh conclusions mention the need to make the beneficiaries of rescue measures contribute to the cost of those measures. This is not the same as devising a tax on financial transactions, as the Parliament resolution is suggesting. Secondly, we recommend a financial supervision system that will combine, in the future, the national supervision authorities and the three European bodies, the creation of which is under way as part of the European legislative procedure.

Lastly, it is important to prevent the widespread use of the term 'tax havens', taken from the G20. Jurisdictions that are by no means tax havens have been included arbitrarily in a 'grey' list, while real tax havens continue to escape all forms of pressure exerted by the G20 and the OECD. Calling countries with moderate taxation tax havens will not help us to reach the end of a crisis whose origins lie elsewhere.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for the European Parliament resolution on the G20 Summit, held in Pittsburgh on 24 and 25 September, because I believe that the present economic difficulties must be used as an opportunity to promote the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and reiterate a commitment to fight unemployment and climate change, as well as to create a European strategy that results in economic recovery that is sustainable in the long term. It is, however, regrettable that the proposal for a Tobin-style tax on financial transactions has not been adopted, as that would make it possible to limit excessive speculation, and promote financial stability and investment in the long term.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Against a backdrop of global economic crisis with serious social consequences, the decisions taken by the G20 become very important. It is through coordinated effort by the members of the G20 that we will be able to construct a financial system that will contribute to more even and sustainable economic development in the future, and so avoid crises like the one we are currently experiencing.

We in the European Union cannot act on our own in case we adopt rules that are not shared by other countries, which would put the European economy at a disadvantage in the globalised world in which we live.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I am pleased with the agreements that were reached at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh. As a result of the globalisation of capital, actions to combat and prevent new crises require the maximum possible international cooperation. I am delighted with the agreements, which have economic growth, the promotion of employment and the regulation of markets in mind, and I hope that these objectives come to fruition 'over a wide area'. As regards the tax on financial transactions to enable excessive speculation to be controlled and encourage long-term investment, it only makes sense if applied on a global scale.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The resolution adopted today is in line with the positions already adopted by various bodies of the European Union, including the European Parliament, in an attempt to hide the true causes of the economic and social crisis and, by manipulating it, to speed up and encourage the continuation and development of the policies that caused it. Among other things, and with regard to tax havens, it only considers that these 'have undermined financial regulation', while merely recommending that it is necessary to 'improve tax transparency and the exchange of information'.

What is required, and what the resolution fails to mention, is the need to break from the neoliberal policies of liberalising and privatising services, of attacking the rights of workers and destroying manufacturing infrastructure. These policies are responsible for the worsening of living conditions, debt, increased unemployment, job insecurity and poverty. It is necessary to value work and workers, to protect productive sectors and public services, to effectively make economic power subordinate to political power, to combat and punish corruption and economic crime, as well as to bring an end to tax havens.

Robert Goebbels (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted against all of the amendments tabled by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance on the G20 resolution in order to protest against that group's tactic of always reopening debates with generally demagogic amendments. The Greens had negotiated the joint motion for

a resolution and obtained satisfaction on many amendments. Nonetheless, they have not signed the joint resolution so that they can make a scene in plenary.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) We voted against the resolution on the G20 for one good reason: at no point does it call into question the global financial system that is at the root of the crisis. It even states that we need yet more globalisation, yet more liberalisation, with the so-called safeguard of multilateral institutions and bodies destined to become a global government.

Yet, refusing to change the system is to guarantee the failure of the few useful and necessary measures proposed. Trying to save at any cost the system as it is today, with markets that are increasingly disconnected from the real economy, is to pave the way for other crises, and to ensure that the declared objective of job creation will not be achieved.

The economy is not an end in itself: it is just one means of achieving political objectives, progress within societies and human development. As long as you submit to its alleged requirements and surrender before the so-called unchanging laws of the market, you will not resolve any problems.

Sylvie Goulard (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) On behalf of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I wish to explain our abstention from the vote on the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance's amendment on a tax on the model of the Tobin tax. Our group has decided to set up a working group on this issue in order to clarify the aim and the practical details of this tax. Then, the political groups, in full knowledge of the facts, will be able to agree on a common approach to this issue, one that has the same meaning for everyone and which can be defended within the appropriate international bodies.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution on the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh. The current economic crisis is truly global in both its roots and its effects, and so coordinated international action is essential to finding solutions. National governments all have a role to play in these solutions and joint action at EU level will ensure that Europe can be at the forefront of driving forward global recovery. The Scottish Government is pushing forward a programme aimed at supporting jobs and communities, strengthening education and skills, and investing in innovation and the industries of the future. Together with the other countries of Europe, we will be able to overcome the challenges we currently face.

Arlene McCarthy (S&D), *in writing*. – I and my Labour colleagues strongly support the commitment made by the G20 to work on a financial transaction tax. Following the costs incurred by taxpayers during the crisis, it is essential that we ensure the financial sector contributes fully and fairly to an improvement in public finances. The Tobin tax is one model of a financial transaction tax which has been proposed. We did not support Amendment 8 as we must consider all options rather than commit specifically to a 'Tobin-style' tax. Furthermore, the amendment suggests that a unilateral European form of such a tax should be considered. The financial services industry is a global industry and our efforts must remain on securing a transaction tax that is effective and workable on a global level.

David Martin (S&D), *in writing*. – I abstained from the vote on Amendment 8 on a financial transaction tax. I am in favour of such a tax, but I believe it needs to be at the global level, rather than European level, in order to be effective.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The joint motion for a resolution on the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh contains a great many positive elements. It plainly points out, for example, the difficulties with the fiscal policy stimulatory measures that have been implemented by the majority of states. The consolidation of national budgets must be given a significant role over the coming years. I also welcome the fact that an attempt is being made to get to grips with the causes of the crisis, with reference being made to unbridled speculation and the lack of regulation in the financial market. This has only been done in a superficial way, however. There is no penetration through to real, needed reforms. Given the immense crisis that we still find ourselves in and that will, sadly, still bring us many more unemployed, this is far too little. It is for that reason that I have abstained from voting.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The motion for a resolution on the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh explicitly states that the crisis is the result of reckless and irresponsible risk-taking by some financial institutions in addition to a lack of regulation of the financial market. The door was thus left wide open for total speculation. It is therefore even more important to adopt appropriate rules for the markets quickly. The ideas put forward in this regard in the motion are, on and off, very much to be welcomed. It is unfortunate, however, that the motion also stands behind the Basel II provisions which, we know from experience, have led to the flow of capital to small and medium-sized businesses practically running dry. The rigorous abolition of

banking secrecy is not something that I can support, out of consideration for the many small bank customers, for which reason I decided to abstain from the final vote.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Firstly, I would applaud the fact that at the G20 meeting, such important issues were tackled as sustainable economic growth, employment and potential climate change phenomena, which could threaten the habitability of our planet. These are current global issues, universally considered vital for the European growth process.

In this respect, I welcome the fact it has been decided to maintain the stimuli for economic recovery and the commitment shown to a strategy that can make the principles of the Lisbon Agenda viable, particularly the global interest in implementing the Global Jobs Pact. On this point, it is important to stress the urgent need to create an anti-cyclical jobs fund at international level and ambitious fiscal stimulus packages which support job creation and retention, along with strong social policies to support the most vulnerable groups.

Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), *in writing.* – (SV) The financial crisis arose partly as a result of banks abusing their customers' trust and taking excessive risks with their customers' money. We think that a more detailed discussion of how international financial transactions should be handled is needed. We do not think that the Tobin tax will be effective in preventing speculation, but we welcome a discussion on how financial institutions such as banks, trust companies and insurance companies can help to create a healthy and stable financial market. The financial crisis shows that international solutions are needed to tackle international problems. This discussion should therefore be held at global level and not merely within the EU.

Paulo Rangel (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I would like to applaud the agreements concluded at the G20 Summit, about which I am very pleased and which were universally seen as a step in the right direction.

Since issues as important as the regulation and supervision of financial markets and the sustainability of public finances were discussed, I would like to give special emphasis to the issue of sustainable economic growth and employment.

I am delighted that the priorities adopted by the G20 are based on the sustainable growth of the real economy, which will not only be the engine that ensures the creation of jobs, but will also serve as a guarantee for the protection of the public from the negative impact of the crisis, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. I am also delighted with the undertaking by the leaders of the G20 to tackle the employment crisis at international level, making the promotion of employment the central element of recovery plans.

I only regret the failure to reach any agreement at the G20 with regard to the global fight against climate change.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), *in writing.* – (FR) It was important for the European Parliament to send out a clear message to the main world leaders following the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh. That has been done with the resolution adopted today, which points out that, although the worst of the financial crisis is behind us, the consequences in terms of budget and employment will be felt for a long time yet without joint action from the European Union, the United States and China. The latter have already taken decisions on the reform of the IMF, the supervision of traders' bonuses, capital requirements, and transparency concerning complex financial products, so this G20 was not in vain.

Nevertheless, at least three huge tasks must still be completed if progress is to be made in controlling globalisation. The first is to really tackle tax havens, so much money that is missing from the States' coffers. The second is to prevent a monetary storm from brewing as a result of the failure to rebalance exchange rates and the pursuit of competitive devaluations. The third is to tackle the volatility of the prices of basic commodities, especially foodstuffs, as this plays a part in increasing the imbalances and poverty in the world.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the recent G20 Summit in Pittsburgh has confirmed a gradual stabilisation of the economic situation. However, it is still necessary to bear in mind problems which may be faced by particular economies. The meeting was an opportunity to confirm the determination of states to reform the system of financial regulation. The greatest danger, which we must not allow, is a further rise in unemployment, a fall in demand and a scaling back of production. The principles proposed in Pittsburgh should be the foundation for common world economic development. The summit has confirmed the need for further work on creating institutions and instruments for inspection and monitoring in a variety of areas of the global market.

Peter Skinner (S&D), *in writing*. – The European Parliamentary Labour Party supported this resolution and gave support to underpinning the progress made last month in Pittsburgh. Without commitments to improve multilateral surveillance within the IMF and further involvement of economies other than the current members, little effective success can be foreseen. There is much to commend this resolution, and with careful thought, greater progress can be expected against the problems of the financial crisis.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Firstly, I would applaud the fact that at the G20 meeting, such important issues were tackled as sustainable economic growth, employment and potential climate change phenomena, which could threaten the habitability of our planet. These are current global issues, universally considered vital for the European growth process.

In this respect, I welcome the fact it has been decided to maintain the stimuli for economic recovery and the commitment shown to a strategy that can make the principles of the Lisbon Agenda viable, particularly the global interest in implementing the Global Jobs Pact. On this point, it is important to stress the urgent need to create an anti-cyclical jobs fund at international level and ambitious fiscal stimulus packages which support job creation and retention, along with strong social policies to support the most vulnerable groups.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The Greek Communist Party voted against the joint motion for a resolution by the conservatives, social democrats and liberals, because it condenses the strategic ambition of the monopolies to pass the painful consequences of the capitalist financial crisis on to the working classes. The political mouthpieces of capitalism are calling in their resolution for the bourgeois governments to continue to support the monopoly behemoths with hot public money and, at the same time, to 'establish healthy public finances', by which they mean even greater cutbacks in social spending, in health, in welfare, in education and so forth. They welcome the creation of 'dignified jobs' which will replace permanent, full-time work with badly-paid, flexible and insecure work, with the minimum possible level of rights. The political representatives of the plutocracy are proposing this 'dignity' to the working classes. The resolution calls for the strengthening of international imperialist organisations (IMF, World Bank, WTO) and paves the way for a 'green' return on capital on the pretext of climate change and the complete liberalisation of international trade, which signals even greater penetration by the monopolies on the markets of developing and poor countries and the plundering of wealth-producing resources and human resources.

- Motion for a resolution: The effects of the global financial and economic crisis on developing countries and on development cooperation (B7-0078/2009)

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Developing countries are severely affected by successive crises such as the food and fuel price crises, and climate change. They are suffering seriously from the consequences of the financial crisis and the economic recession. It is essential that the EU and the Member States take their responsibility as international actors, meeting their public development aid commitments, and that they continue to contribute to attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

The EU has frontloaded EUR 8.8 billion of development aid, budget support and agricultural financing for immediate action, and proposes contributing EUR 500 million to support social spending in developing countries through the FLEX mechanism for ACP countries. It is important that budget support be focused on the fields of health, decent work, education, social services and green growth. The Commission is called on to find new sources of funding to safeguard the European Development Fund (EDF), and it is also important for the EDF to be brought within the Community budget. Increased consistency between the EU's international trade, budgetary, climate change and development policies is also necessary.

Development aid must favour...

(Explanation of vote abbreviated in accordance with Rule 170(1)(1) of the Rules of Procedure)

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – Despite the fact that developing countries were certainly not the cause of the crises, it is certainly true that they have been most adversely and disproportionately affected by it. This is why I have voted in favour of this resolution.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Although the current economic and financial crisis originated in the United States, its consequences have been felt worldwide. It has affected Europe and, more severely, developing countries, whether through human costs that dragged millions of people into extreme poverty, or through the weakening of their already feeble economies.

It is urgent that all entities that play an active role in public development aid – particularly the institutions of Bretton Woods – respond to the situation rapidly and effectively. It is also essential that the European Union and its Member States take on the responsibilities of frontline actors in development aid by meeting their international commitments to these countries, by an urgent increase in aid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and by an increase in the volume of public development aid, which is insufficient to react to the collateral damage of this crisis in developing countries.

It is also pressing, especially in the lead up to the Copenhagen conference, that the EU and other international actors articulate their policies on international trade, climate change, humanitarian aid and development. For these reasons, I support this resolution.

Corina Crețu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) We are facing an emergency situation with regard to development and humanitarian aid due to the economic crisis, the human cost of which continues to mount up, all the more so as this recession comes in the wake of the food and oil price crises. Unfortunately, one of the direct consequences of the economic crisis is an international donor crisis, against the backdrop of accelerated growth in the level of poverty. In 2009 alone, 90 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty, while the number of unemployed has risen by 23 million. A glimmer of hope is offered by the proposals adopted today for providing aid to the most vulnerable countries, the developing countries. However, these do not go far enough, given that the USD 6 billion obtained from the sale of IMF gold reserves and earmarked for providing aid to poor countries can cover only 2% of their actual needs. Consequently, I believe that the pressure must be increased on the G20 States to assume the major specific responsibility for triggering the crisis by mobilising resources in the form of crisis support to be allocated to the developing countries. With this need to streamline the system in mind, I welcome the criticism in the resolution about the failure of the Pittsburgh Summit to tackle the subject of reforming the international financial institutions, given the Bretton Woods institutions' slow response to the crisis.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Developing countries have been severely affected by the present economic and financial crisis and it is feared that they will suffer a sharp slowdown, or even a serious decline, in their growth and progress indices. The EU and the Member States, as significant donors, must keep this fact in mind and consider increasing aid to these countries. The alternative is that some of them drop irreparably into levels of poverty that could bring about or worsen social and political conflicts, and contribute to shortages in regions that have been striving, with difficulty, for peace and development.

This increase, which must be oriented towards flexibility, imagination, solidarity and good sense, must be accompanied by rigorous monitoring by the donors in terms of how the aid is used and by effective tracking of the sums made available to the beneficiary countries, from their transfer to their final destination. The civil societies and parliaments of these countries must be involved in this effort towards transparency, and the EU must foster national debates on where the received aid should go.

Even against a backdrop of economic downturn, Europe cannot, and must not, shut itself off and ignore the burning issues that surround it.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) Developing countries have been hard hit by the current financial and economic crisis, which was caused by banks and other speculators in the United States. This has a massive impact on their already weak economies and will put millions more people out of work. The unemployed will, where possible, seek their salvation in Europe, thereby increasing the migration pressure on Europe even further. We Europeans must therefore support these countries in building up their economies. The current form of development aid is an unsuitable tool for this purpose, as lots of funds disappear into dark channels or are diverted back into European bank accounts belonging to corrupt despots. For this reason, despite numerous positive ideas, I abstained from voting on the Committee on Development's motion in the final vote.

Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) The financial crisis arose partly as a result of banks abusing their customers' trust and taking excessive risks with their customers' money. We think that a more detailed discussion of how international financial transactions should be handled is needed. We do not think that the Tobin tax will be effective in preventing speculation, but we welcome a discussion on how financial institutions such as banks, trust companies and insurance companies can help to create a healthy and stable financial market. The financial crisis shows that international solutions are needed to tackle international problems. This discussion should therefore be held at a global level and not merely within the EU.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), *in writing*. – (FI) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, as the Committee on Development's motion for a resolution mentions, all to its credit, the existing global financial and economic crisis has hit the poorest countries hardest. The development targets achieved in many developing countries are at risk and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals seems ever more difficult. Despite the many promises made by developed countries, expressed publicly at the G20 and G8 Summits, for example, the amount of aid sent to developing countries is nowhere near what was pledged. In fact, even before the crisis erupted, the amount of development aid from many EU Member States was far less than what they had promised.

The crisis may also be a new opportunity. The considerable growth in International Monetary Fund resources and changes to that organisation's decision-making system are two reasons for thinking there may be positive developments. The reform of the IMF and the additional resources answer a sore need, but this alone is not nearly enough to ease the situation facing the world's poorest. The developed countries must keep their word regarding their commitment to the Millennium Goals and to the 0.7% of GDP needed to increase development aid. The financing needed to fight and adapt to climate change is an additional responsibility that the developed world cannot afford to wriggle out of. The fundamental pillar of the new international rules must be the notion of more equal opportunities to be involved in revising the rules as well as playing by them.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Madam President, I voted for adoption of the resolution, because I think that it contains many very pertinent remarks on the causes and effects of the current difficult situation in developing countries. I would especially like to stress that the present economic crisis is a result not only of the collapse of financial markets, but also of the earlier food and energy crises. I consider it essential to take action aimed at the rapid and more effective use of means which have been made available by developed countries. This is of particular significance when we consider the fact that wealthy countries are currently struggling with internal problems, such as an insufficient budget or time limitations. I stress once again: it is most important to simplify procedures, so that funds which move from rich countries to poor ones do not disappear in a sea of bureaucracy.

Catherine Soullie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Providing aid to developing countries is one duty that the European Union must not abandon. The current economic and financial crisis has given a new dimension to globalisation. The idea of a tax on financial transactions was beneficial: President Sarkozy has made it one of his priorities. Europe, it seems, has set the pace and the world has followed. The new, sound workings of international finance will have to be based on fairness.

Thus, I regret that the Striffler-Ponga amendment has been rejected, as it proposed a tax on financial transactions to be added to official development assistance, so that the least developed countries could benefit from it. It is true that our economies and our financial systems would have had a greater tax burden, but the European Union would thus have been the initiator of a great international solidarity movement.

We can still hope that the resolution adopted here will encourage the Union to honour its commitments and to help developing countries keep pace with globalisation.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (NL) I endorsed with conviction the resolution tabled by the Committee on Development on the effects of the global financial and economic crisis on developing countries. The EP rightly calls on the EU to eradicate abuses of tax havens, tax evasion and illicit capital flight from developing countries. The IMF has rightly increased the funds for combating the financial and economic crisis. Yet it is downright alarming that, to date, 82% of these resources have ended up in Europe and just 1.6% in Africa. The first priority must now be accorded to poverty reduction. It is also essential that economic partnership agreements (EPAs) be used as a means of giving the countries concerned commercial advantages, and that these countries also be able to leave certain sensitive products and sectors, such as investment and services, out of the negotiations. I regret that the amendment asking the Commission and the Member States to present proposals for innovative funding mechanisms, such as a tax on financial transactions to supplement Official Development Assistance, was not accepted.

Iva Zanicchi (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution but I feel it is necessary to provide some clarifications. The recent financial crisis has caused a global economic recession which, due to its many repercussions, has had a particular impact on developing countries, exacerbating the food crisis: according to data supplied by the FAO, the number of starving people has reached in excess of the one billion mark for the first time in history, and there are 100 million more malnourished people than there were in 2008.

The impact of the financial crisis on countries in the ACP region has been devastating, making the environmental challenges and the volatility of food prices even more complex. Those countries are not responsible for the crisis, but they have suffered the worst of its consequences, receiving the smallest quantity of aid. This is no longer acceptable. For these reasons, faced with a situation that it is not a cliché to call tragic, I believe it is necessary to improve the quality of the aid that is allocated to those countries, rather than just look at the quantity. I believe it is necessary to act more transparently and effectively when using the funds and I believe it is necessary to verify the results obtained in an impartial manner.

President. – That concludes the explanations of vote.

9. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

10. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

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

12. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

13. Adjournment of the session

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

(The sitting was closed at 11.50)