

TUESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.10)

2. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (announcement of motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

3. Presentation by the Council of the draft general budget for the 2010 financial year (debate)

President. – The next item is the presentation by the Council of the draft general budget for the 2010 financial year.

Hans Lindblad, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, it is a tremendous privilege for me to be here today. It makes me feel very humble and I am delighted to have the chance to present the Council's draft general budget to you.

Europe is facing considerable challenges. The economic situation looked significantly more worrying six months ago, but it seems to have stabilised. The risk scenario is more balanced and the risk of being drawn deeper into a downward spiral has reduced.

However, we face significant problems in the form of rising unemployment, growing budgetary deficits and increasing debt. In the light of this, there is a great need to maintain public finances that are sustainable in the long term. Many countries have a long way to go to balance their public finances.

Demographics will exert huge pressure on public finances. The challenges we face with regard to the climate will require new resources and the redistribution of existing resources. Overall, this means, in our opinion, that the budget that we are to agree on should reflect a high degree of restraint in order to leave room for future needs, with the emphasis on European added value and investments which, in the short term, can bring us out of the economic crisis and, in the long term, can also strengthen our competitiveness.

The Council's draft, which was adopted unanimously, deals with and contributes to meeting these challenges. It is a disciplined budget and a sound one from the point of view of state finances. It will promote research, education, competitiveness, innovation and the building of infrastructures, and it will promote cohesion. The Council's draft also contains margins for coping with unforeseen events.

The logic behind our draft general budget is quite simple. If we want to stimulate growth, employment and prosperity, the textbooks say that we should pursue a sustainable, credible and cautious policy, but with investment in education, research and infrastructure and in levelling out wage differences throughout the EU. This is precisely what we have attempted to do.

The Council's draft is balanced, while still being ambitious. Compared with the 2009 budget, our commitments have increased by 1.1% and the payment appropriations by nearly 4%. Our draft and the agreement that we want to reach must meet the following fundamental requirements, which were also applied during the Council's first reading. The budget must ensure that the EU's various political priorities for 2010 are adequately financed. We in the EU must be able to react quickly to the challenges that await us. There must be an emphasis on providing European added value. Budgetary discipline and sound economic management are required. Otherwise, we will not be able to take the gradual steps towards balancing public finances once again.

It is important to respect the ceilings. The EU must have sufficient flexibility to cope with future needs and unforeseen events. It is vital for the EU budget to have adequate margins. The draft general budget that we are tabling represents EUR 138 billion in commitment appropriations and EUR 121 billion in payment appropriations. The reductions that the Council has made in relation to the preliminary draft budget presented by the Commission are based on a detailed analysis of the budget implementation, the budget forecast alerts

and activity declarations, and we are looking at the capacity available to implement programmes and measures. The degree of implementation and the absorption capacity have been key factors in our analysis.

I will now take a brief look at the individual headings. Sub-heading 1A, research and innovation, is the most important element, and adequate funds have been secured in our draft budget. Another area to which more resources will be directed is projects within the energy and infrastructure sectors. If we adjust for the accounting effects of the economic recovery plan, the increase in this area amounts to around 8%. Eight percent! That is a lot, and as you all know, the financing of the European Economic Recovery Plan will be one of those topics that we will need to discuss during the autumn.

Under sub-heading 1B, the Council accepted the commitment appropriations proposed by the Commission. As regards payments, the Council believes that certain reductions can be made in relation to the preliminary draft budget, but I would like to stress that our draft nevertheless represents an increase in payment appropriations of 3.2% compared to 2009.

Under heading 2, the Council is proposing substantial increases with regard to both commitment appropriations and payment appropriations compared with 2009, by 4.5% and 9.5%, respectively, if we adjust for the accounting effects of the recovery plan.

With regard to heading 3, the Council made only a few small adjustments to the Commission's preliminary draft budget. Sufficient resources will be available for migration policy, including Frontex.

As regards heading 4, it is extremely important to leave a substantial margin to the ceiling under this heading in order to be able to cope with unforeseen needs in the best possible way. The Council therefore secured a margin of around EUR 310 million in its first reading. This is particularly justified in light of the letter of amendment, which includes additional needs in this area. As regards the Emergency Aid Reserve, the Council accepted the Commission's proposal regarding commitment appropriations. The common foreign and security policy is increasing in importance and the Council will therefore ensure that adequate funds are available for this.

With regard to administration, the Council made certain targeted reductions in view of the economic situation and the specificities of each institution. The aim is to ensure that administrative expenditure does not increase faster than inflation. The institutions' requests for additional posts for new activities were not accepted, except for the new agencies that are planned for 2010 and for Frontex.

At our conciliation meeting in July, it was highlighted once again how important it is for the recruitment associated with the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 to be carried out, and we agreed on a joint statement. On the same occasion, your representatives indicated that they were willing to try to find a common approach in respect of the building policy of the EU institutions and bodies. I am sure that such a statement will, fortunately, be forthcoming later in the autumn.

Before I close, I would like to mention, and indeed to emphasise, the positive atmosphere that prevailed in our meetings with the European Parliament. I believe that constructive cooperation is the only way to achieve a sound budget.

Algirdas Šemeta, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, it is a great pleasure for me to have an opportunity to speak to you this morning. I know that the first stages of this budgetary procedure – in particular the July conciliation – took place in a very positive atmosphere, and I hope we can build on this cooperation in the coming weeks. We still have some way to go in the 2010 budget procedures, and there are other important issues to agree on, such as the second phase of the European Economic Recovery Plan, so it is crucial that all three institutions work closely together.

Turning to the actual situation following the Council's first reading and the establishment of the draft budget for 2010, the Commission acknowledges that the cuts proposed by the Council are less severe than in previous years. However, there are some particular concerns which I would like to highlight. The Commission regrets the Council's cut of EUR 1.8 billion in payment appropriations. These cuts are proportionately more significant for Headings 1A and 4, and sent a negative message in the priority areas of growth in jobs and the EU's international role, not least in relation to pre-accession assistance.

The cuts proposed to the administrative support expenditure allowance, the administrative allowance for research and the agencies are particularly harsh. Rather than taking into account the specific situation of each agency, the cuts – with few exceptions – have been general, regardless of the stage of development or tasks of the agency concerned. The cuts in administrative support expenditure will hamper the implementation

of programmes, particularly in the field of research and for external actions. I am hopeful that, in preparing its first reading, Parliament will seek to redress this situation.

Although the cuts in Headings 1B and 2 are regrettable, I am partly reassured by the Council's proposed declaration on payments and by the second opportunity to examine the needs for agriculture in the upcoming letter of amendment which the Commission will present at the end of October.

As announced, the Commission has now presented the budgetary authority with an amending letter to update the needs for Heading 4. The key elements of this concern: an additional EUR 95 million in commitment and EUR 60 million in payment appropriations to support the Palestinian Authority and reconstruction efforts in Gaza; and the need to consider the establishment of Bananas Accompanying Measures in view of the possible trade agreement that will affect the preferential regime of ACP banana-supplying countries. There is also an additional EUR 50 million in commitment appropriations and EUR 20 million in payment appropriations to assist developing countries in combating climate change, which should help to promote a successful outcome to the December Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

Under Heading 5 (Administration), the Commission was particularly modest in its PDB requests with a proposed increase in the Commission's administrative expenditure of only 0.9% compared to 2009. While this point has been acknowledged by the Presidency, it is rather disappointing that the Council has introduced further cuts to the Commission's administrative budget.

In conclusion I am hopeful that the European Parliament will restore the appropriations cut by the Council and I am confident that our ongoing negotiations between the three institutions will be constructive and that we will achieve a satisfactory outcome to this budget procedure.

President. – Thank you, Mr Šemeta, for presenting the position of the Commission, and also for keeping to time, which is very important. I would like to say that this is an initial discussion. We are now going to discuss this in the Committee on Budgets and in other committees, and the main discussion will take place in a few weeks.

László Surján, rapporteur. – (HU) I am going to speak in my mother tongue because I am hoping for a Europe where this act is a natural right in every parliament, not to mention in other areas of public life as well. In that Europe, there is no law preventing anyone from using their mother tongue, not even in Slovakia. I also expected that the current financial crisis would not only reduce production and increase unemployment, but also provide us with an opportunity to improve the European Union's budget through reform measures.

Parliament already expressed its point of view in February. It was encouraging that the European Commission and Council expressed their agreement with it. Based on what I know about the draft, I am sad to say that the attempt to translate the fine words into the language of numbers was not a complete success. It is time to face up to the fact that no one is happy with the European Union's budget. The budget's revenue side is a serious burden for Member States, but the sum available is not sufficient for them to achieve their objectives. We are far away from achieving both full employment and a knowledge-based society. We spend large sums on agriculture, but dairy farmers, for instance, are affected by an unmanageable crisis. The biggest item on the expenditure side is the cohesion policy, but the gaps between regions are growing instead of decreasing.

Researchers born and trained in Europe are working outside the European Union. We are therefore lagging behind when it comes to innovation as well. We hoped that the crisis would also provide an opportunity for us to have a shake-up and make the European Union's budget more successful and tangible for its citizens. We also hoped to use the budget not only in compliance with the rules and without any corruption, but also to take a look at the expenses and consider which programmes actually provide value and success for our money.

What can we do now? Parliament will endeavour to shape the budget in such a way that its message will be clearer to the EU's citizens. We want to increase those items which help tackle the crisis. With this in mind, we are putting forward our thoughts on implementing the economic stimulus plan. We want to tackle head on the challenges posed by climate change as well. What we would like is for the financial crisis to be tackled effectively, not only using a couple of billion euros from the plan earmarked for this purpose, but also with every item in the budget, so that Europeans realise that the European Union is not a superfluous expense, but an effective tool for solving their problems. I call on my fellow Members, the Council and Commission to support this.

Vladimír Maňka, *rapporteur*. – (SK) Mr President, Secretary of State, Commissioner, we can surely agree that when drawing up the European Parliament's budget, we must focus on our core mission, which is legislative work. Issues unconnected with this must be excluded from the budget as much as possible.

We will discuss the final form of the budget today in an arbitration process involving the Presidency of the European Parliament and the Committee on Budgets. At this point, I would like to thank the representatives of the political groupings. In the meeting of the Committee on Budgets yesterday, they backed proposals to reduce the budget and measures which will lead to the better use of financial resources.

We are constantly confronted with numerous shortcomings that prevent us from using our resources in a fully efficient manner. One example of this is the security for the buildings in which we are conducting these debates today. As you know, we spend four days a month in Strasbourg. Despite this, there were security guards stationed at both entrances 365 days a year until recently. The new Secretary General of the European Parliament and his colleagues discovered this and implemented measures which will bring annual savings of more than EUR 2 million.

Another example is the Court of Auditors' reports on translations. Insufficient planning and insufficient communication or a complete absence of communication regarding the availability of translation resources prevents these resources being used effectively. The organisation which is supposed to provide translations often instructs external translators automatically without even checking whether there is any spare capacity available in the internal organisation.

It is for this reason that we are proposing a reserve of 5% against the resources earmarked for translation in the budgets of the various institutions. We shall release this reserve when they show that they have tried to make full use of the resources of the internal organisation. In the area of translations alone, we can save around EUR 11 million annually.

There are many similar examples. Most of them have a common denominator: we are making little use of independent studies into the use of resources and the organisation of work. I believe that the political will shown yesterday by the representatives of the various political groupings in the discussions of the Committee on Budgets will bear fruit.

Expenses for the purchase, upkeep and rental of buildings form one of the main administrative expense items of EU institutions. There have been various cases in the past where institutions have purchased or rented property using methods that were not entirely efficient. According to the Court of Auditors, the institutions do not cooperate in these areas or even fail to assess their own policies.

We have therefore asked the European Parliament administration to draw up a medium-term strategic document on buildings. We wanted to adopt a sensible decision on this matter in the first reading. There is a need to draw up a joint policy on buildings, not only in the European Parliament, but also within the framework of all institutions, and to ensure better cooperation in this area. Secretary of State, I am delighted that, like us, the Council has adopted this as a priority objective and I would like to express my thanks for that.

Alain Lamassoure, *Chairman of the Committee on Budgets*. – (FR) Mr President, may I first of all congratulate Mr Šemeta on the confirmation obtained yesterday of his appointment as Commissioner responsible for the budget.

We are convinced that we will enjoy the same quality of relations with him as those which we established with his predecessor, and we wish him a political career that is as brilliant as that of Mrs Grybauskaitė.

Mr President, we are going through a period of global crisis, of preparation for major diplomatic events and of institutional uncertainty within the Union itself. In a period such as this, the Committee on Budgets will seek to adopt a cooperative attitude. As our rapporteur said, we regret the cuts made by the Council in the Commission's proposals but, at the same time, we understand that the state of the Member States' public finances prevents them from going much further this year.

For the 2010 budget, as has been said, we have an obligation to produce results: namely, balancing the financing of the 2010 section of the recovery plan. We know that redeployments will be necessary, but they must not focus on other political priorities previously decided on together by Parliament and by the Council.

Beyond 2010, Parliament will hope to undertake work jointly with the Commission, the Council, the Swedish Presidency and the future Spanish Presidency on three major issues for the future.

If, of course, things turn out as we hope in Ireland, the first issue will be the implementation of the procedure, schedule and working methods required by the application of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The second issue will be the mid-term review of the financial perspective. Between the joint decision on the multiannual financial framework taken in May 2006 and now, there has been the financial crisis, the very strong pressures on the price of energy, raw materials and even foodstuffs, and the negotiations on climate change. There has also been – I am sorry to say – the failure of the Lisbon Strategy, as is plain to see today. It is therefore a thorough review of our multiannual guidelines that we need. This will be the first task of the new Commission.

Lastly, the third and final issue will be the reform of the resources that make up the European budget. We knew before the crisis that none of the Member States wanted to pay for Europe's spending any more. Since the crisis, none of the Member States can pay for this spending any more. Our financial contribution to the economic recovery will represent scarcely 0.03% of the Union's GDP.

We are fully aware of the extreme difficulty of the issue, but the European Parliament started work on it four years ago with the national parliaments, and it intends to put itself in a position to propose some areas of work so as to launch the debate next year.

Hans Lindblad, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, we have heard from both the Commission and the European Parliament that we will have several difficult issues to deal with during the autumn. Hopefully, we will have some easy ones to deal with, too. One of the most difficult issues is going to be the recovery plan and how it is to be financed. At the same time, I am very hopeful that we will succeed. I know that we will succeed. There is no alternative.

Another issue that we face, both in the short term and in the long term, is, of course, the climate and the financing of climate policy.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for allowing me to speak here today.

President. – The debate is closed.

I would like to congratulate the Commissioner on his appointment. Commissioner, great careers await commissioners from Lithuania. We wish you much success, both in the Commission and in the future. Your predecessor is, today, the Head of State in Lithuania.

4. Immigration, the role of Frontex and cooperation among Member States (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on immigration, the role of Frontex, and cooperation among Member States.

Tobias Billström, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, issues concerning migration are always topical in the EU's work. An important element in dealing with migratory flows is border control. Free movement for people within the EU and the absence of controls at internal borders bring a shared responsibility and an increased requirement for proper and effective management of our external borders.

The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) is responsible for coordinating and supporting Member States' efforts to monitor and control the EU's external borders. Frontex is an important element in the EU's integrated border management strategy. Since its launch in 2005, Frontex's capacity has been progressively expanded. In line with an increased budget, Frontex now plays an even greater role in managing the operational cooperation between Member States in connection with the control of the EU's external borders.

The Agency is currently coordinating a number of joint operations and pilot projects at maritime, land and air borders with a view to combating illegal immigration, with a particular emphasis on certain high-risk areas such as the southern maritime borders of the EU, although the northern and eastern borders are also covered. In the Council, we have, on several occasions, emphasised the need to develop and strengthen Frontex. The Council's conclusions from 2008 give the political priorities for the continued development of the Agency. In the short term, it was stressed that Frontex must be allocated the necessary resources and that maximum use must be made of the equipment provided by the Member States within the framework of the Centralised Record of Available Technical Equipment (CRATE). The Council also urged Frontex to

foster cooperation with other border control authorities, including customs authorities, and with third countries with regard to border control.

In the long term, it was emphasised that the future development of Frontex operations should still continue to be carried out in stages. The Council welcomed the Commission's plan to examine how Frontex's mandate can be extended to enable increased cooperation with third countries. An evaluation of the Frontex Regulation is currently being carried out and the Commission will present a proposal for possible amendments at the beginning of 2010. The Council is looking forward to adopting a position on the Commission's proposed amendments together with the European Parliament.

It was also emphasised in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which was adopted by the European Council in October 2008, that the Agency's role and resources for cooperation need to be strengthened. The Pact also referred to the possibility of establishing separate divisions within Frontex, as conditions differ so markedly, for example, at the land border in the east compared with the maritime border in the south. In the light of the events in the Mediterranean, the European Council, in its conclusions from June 2009, also emphasised the need to increase efforts to prevent and combat illegal immigration and to prevent any future human tragedies at the EU's southern maritime border. The need to tighten up border controls and the need for clear rules for joint patrols and the landing of those that are rescued, as well as the increased use of joint repatriation flights, were given particular emphasis.

In conclusion, I would like to clarify the fact that the situation in the Mediterranean does not only involve taking action in the area of border control. This situation requires a broad spectrum of both short-term and long-term measures. The starting point in this regard should be the EU's global approach to migration, which includes cooperation and measures within the entire migration policy area. Enhanced cooperation with the countries of origin and transit is fundamental and the dialogue with third countries should be intensified in areas such as legal immigration, migration and development, capacity building and the repatriation of people who have no need of protection. This dialogue must be based on the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility.

IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

Vice-President

Jacques Barrot, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (FR) Mr President, migration is a priority issue that will be keeping the institution very busy, and I wish to thank Mr Tobias Billström, who is well acquainted with this problem.

We are in the process of drafting an immigration policy based on three pillars: respect for the right of asylum, the fight against illegal immigration, and European coordination to provide for legal migration.

Access to EU territory must be gained in accordance with certain rules, in compliance with national policies and with common standards that the Union implements, and not illegally, often at the cost of human lives. The Mediterranean must remain the link between our civilisations rather than a place of misery and desolation.

The challenge of illegal immigration cannot be solved exclusively by those Member States that are more particularly exposed because their borders coincide with the external border of the Union. It really is important for all of the EU Member States to show solidarity in the face of this challenge. The Union has already adopted common rules, has devoted resources to this and has developed significant means of action. That said, it is true that new initiatives will be necessary given the scale of the illegal migratory flows.

The challenge of illegal migration does, of course, require an effective prevention strategy, implemented in partnership with all of the countries located along the migratory routes. The European Union is doing all it can to develop these dialogues and this cooperation. The aim of this global approach is to deal with all of the main dimensions of immigration together and in a balanced way. As Mr Billström just said, this approach guides our work in the Mediterranean, which is the meeting point of the migratory flows coming from the different regions and passing through various countries in Asia and Africa.

The Commission has made a firm commitment to promote the appropriate bilateral regional cooperation frameworks. Faced with the proliferation of unacceptable human tragedies, I travelled to these European access points: Lampedusa, Malta, the Canary Islands and Greece. I started a debate within the Commission and I referred suggestions of a more united and effective European policy to my ministerial colleagues within the Council.

The work subsequently carried out formed the basis of a series of decisions taken by the June European Council. Since then, the Commission has been working on three major themes. Firstly, asylum: the European Council called for the coordination of voluntary measures concerning the internal distribution of recipients of international protection who reside in the Member States most exposed to these pressures. The Commission responded to this appeal by launching, in July, a pilot project to help Malta. It has made provision for Community funding opportunities for Member States that will be willing to show solidarity with Malta. To date, France has agreed to resettle almost 100 refugees on its territory. I should like this gesture, ladies and gentlemen, Mr President, to be repeated by other Member States.

On 2 September, I also presented the European Parliament and the Council with a communication proposing a common European programme on the resettlement of refugees from third countries. I know, Mr Billström, that this programme is close to your heart. It outlines common annual priorities in relation to resettlement, together with proposals on how to make more effective use of the financial aid granted to the Member States under the European Refugee Fund.

The European Asylum Support Office must be able to play a dominant role in the effective implementation of these initiatives. The Commission's proposal for a regulation on the creation of this Office is currently being examined within the Community institutions. I should really like it if Parliament and the Council could come to an agreement under the Swedish Presidency in order to make this Support Office operational in 2010, and I am very much counting on our Commission and on the Swedish Presidency. That is all as regards asylum.

The second theme is that of the external borders. As Mr Billström explained very well, the European Council wanted the border control operations coordinated by Frontex to be strengthened. It asked us to lay down clear rules of engagement for the joint patrols, and precise provisions for the disembarkation of rescued persons and for the organisation of common return flights.

We must also examine how Frontex can cooperate with third countries. The budget for financing Frontex operations in 2009 has been increased to EUR 36 million, and we are currently looking into how Frontex can organise the repatriation of illegal migrants.

It should be pointed out that the border control operations are conducted in accordance with Community law, in particular with the Schengen Borders Code. Fundamental rights and the prohibition of return must be respected. In maritime areas, these operations must also be conducted in accordance with international maritime law. However, these rules are not interpreted or applied uniformly by the Member States. That is why we are going to try to see how these rules can be developed and clarified so that Community law and international law can be applied better within the context of these operations.

We are also busy preparing a proposal that will allow changes to the regulation establishing the Frontex agency and its working methods. This proposal will be submitted in early 2010. It will cover the European Parliament's report and the assessment that will have been carried out by the agency in accordance with Article 33 of the Frontex regulation. The aim is to optimise and strengthen the role of Frontex in border cooperation matters.

I now come to the third theme. The European Council stressed the need for enhanced cooperation with the main countries of origin and of transit and asked the Commission to look at possible ways of cooperating in practice with these countries. To follow up on this request, the Commission has put a great deal of effort into stepping up the dialogue and cooperation with Libya and Turkey, which are the two key countries on the illegal migration routes in the Mediterranean.

With regard to Libya, Mr Billström and I sent a letter in July proposing to our Libyan partners that we cooperate in a number of areas to ensure the joint and balanced management of migratory flows from Libya. We explained to the Libyan authorities that we were willing to help them not only to strengthen their capacities to prevent migrants from illegally entering and leaving their territory, but also to improve the treatment of migrants in accordance with human rights and with international rules and to identify and assist migrants who need international protection.

The Commission already cofinances pilot measures through the United Nations HCR, the International Organisation for Migration and the Italian Ministry of the Interior. However, the only way in which we will be able to give the required scope to our action is with a clear commitment from the Libyan authorities. I make no secret of the fact, Mr Billström, that I am somewhat eagerly awaiting the reply to our letter.

With regard to Turkey, the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security, Jonathan Faull, is today on an assignment in Ankara to investigate the extent to which, and the means by which, an increase in cooperation could encourage the Turkish authorities to become more involved in a more responsible form of migration management, with the aim both of re-admitting illegal immigrants and, above all, of providing international protection for refugees. If Turkey and Libya are willing to take up our offers, we and Mr Billström will be able to visit these two countries before the end of the year.

Finally, I should like to mention the Stockholm programme, which must lay the foundations for a more effective common policy and which will enable us to promote coordinated immigration in the spirit of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. We submitted our proposals in June, and they were given a favourable reception at the informal ministerial debate held in July by the Swedish Presidency.

I shall not repeat what I said just now, that is, the three major themes of this policy, a common asylum system in line with our humanitarian traditions, more effective control of illegal immigration through more integrated management of our internal borders and our visa policy, and then, of course, the increased effectiveness of our fight against human trafficking and the implementation of a specific return policy aimed at the long-term reintegration of migrants into their community of origin, as well as the opening up to legal migration within a framework that guarantees that the needs of host countries are accommodated, without forgetting the needs of countries of origin or respect for the rights of migrants.

There you have it. I have overrun slightly, Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, but I wanted to follow on from Mr Billström's very sound explanations by highlighting the major themes of a policy, of a European strategy that I believe is now beginning to take shape. Our Member States still need to show the full solidarity and the determination necessary to implement this strategy. I am very much counting on the European Parliament to help us in this matter.

Simon Busuttil, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (MT) Thank you, Mr President, I would also like to welcome Minister Billström and, in particular, the Vice-President of the European Commission, Jacques Barrot. Allow me Mr President, to congratulate and thank the Vice-President of the European Commission for the considerable and genuine efforts that he has undertaken in the field of immigration and asylum. I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to Mr Barrot for the passion with which he has chosen to carry out this work, and for the concrete initiatives which he has launched in this difficult, controversial and sensitive area. This brings me on to the first point I would like to raise, Mr President, regarding the complexity of this subject.

It is easy to point fingers at one country or other: however, we have to analyse the situation seriously and thoroughly. Otherwise we run the risk of falling prey to the absurd. Allow me to give an example. Lately, there has been criticism levelled at the Italian Government because they promptly sent arriving immigrants back to Libya. However, we have to understand that as a result of Italy's actions, the number of immigrants that have chosen to brave the hazardous journey and risk their lives have decreased considerably this year.

It is important to realise that this return system has dealt a big blow to organised crime and human traffickers. This means that while it is doubtlessly necessary to respect immigrants' right to asylum, it is likewise imperative to persevere in our efforts to put a stop once and for all to this tragedy which is taking place in the Mediterranean. What is just as important is to go on battling human traffickers who are exploiting the misery and difficulties that immigrants wishing to cross over to Europe are experiencing.

Therefore, we must keep the complexity of the subject in mind at all times. I would like to mention some other points. We must improve upon Frontex, especially with regard to the potential cooperation that could take place between countries, and which include concrete issues such as those tied to return policies involving more than one country. Unfortunately, in this field, Frontex has not yet made enough effort. The initiatives cited by Vice-President Barrot also merit attention, such as the general resettlement programme, the pilot project for countries like Malta and the establishment of an asylum office. These are initiatives that need to be put into place instantly. To conclude, another equally important factor that requires attention is cooperation with Libya and other third countries which are the departure points for immigrants. Without the cooperation of these countries we will get nowhere.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, Mr Billström, Commissioner Barrot, I agree with the importance and support the emphasis that both the Presidency and the Commission have placed on identifying this as one of the most influential dimensions of globalisation that needs a European response.

This is an area in which Europe can make sense, by adding value to the management of one of the most unequivocal dimensions of globalisation, namely the unprecedented dimension taken on by migration, and therefore migratory flows and their impact in all areas of importance to European integration.

This phenomenon cannot be tackled by any of the Member States on their own, based on their individual capacities. As a result, we need a common policy, which has still not been developed. Everything that has been done to develop this common policy, which must be developed, should have occurred under the European Constitution and under the Treaty of Lisbon. However, this policy has still not been developed. Everything that has been done is in anticipation of what must be done and is still in the very early stages.

However, it is clear that the response must be coherent with the European identity. As a result, commitment to the correction of inequalities at source, by reinforcing development cooperation, is the first point.

Secondly, we need to reinforce the fight against the political and criminal dimensions of this phenomenon, by also tackling those organisations which traffic human beings. At the same time, we must improve information on the risks of illegal immigration and on illegal trafficking, training at source and illegal employment. The response must involve legal migration, as an alternative to illegal immigration.

Finally, we must make a serious commitment to human rights. That involves the dimensions of asylum and refugees, and also compliance with the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which was signed in October 2008.

However, in the meantime, we must reinforce the European external border, in terms of both its control and our joint responsibility for it. The impact of illegal immigration in Italy, Spain or Greece – as evident in Spain in relation to the southern Mediterranean border, and also in the Canary Islands, with the canoes that arrive full of desperate people – is not purely a Spanish or an Italian matter. It is a European matter, which does not simply require solidarity with Spain or Italy, or even less a hope that Spain and Italy will comply with the European model in their bilateral relations with African countries. No, it is a joint responsibility, which requires a joint response.

That is why the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs has supported the strengthening of Frontex and also the increase of its budget, which we hope will be supported in this House, because we support the emphasis and importance placed on this matter by the Swedish Presidency.

Sonia Alfano, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you Mr Barrot and Mr Billström. Back on 31 August, I tabled a priority question to the Commission. It is true that the number of migrants reaching Italian and Libyan shores has fallen, but this is because the number of dead which the Mediterranean Sea continues to receive has risen.

Alas, the Mediterranean has now become a mass grave and the Berlusconi Government, to wit, the Italian Government, has signed an agreement with Libya which unfortunately allows Italy to refuse entry not only to migrants, but also refugees from countries where there is persecution or civil war, such as Somalia and Eritrea, and denies these poor people the right to seek asylum, thereby breaching every international rule and the Geneva Convention in particular.

I would remind you that non-refoulement is a principle which knows no geographical boundaries and which cannot be haggled over or negotiated under any circumstances. We do not want to continue thinking that ultimately, this Italy-Libya agreement boils down to economic interests worth around EUR 5 000 billion.

I demand that the Commission does not – if this is its intention – conclude an EU-Libya agreement similar to the Italian one, as we have seen the results of that despicable agreement. I repeat, alas this agreement forces these people to undergo torture, because this is what we are dealing with: the detention centres to which they are taken in Libya are torture, according to press reports and also photographs, for example, photographs which show many of these immigrants in Ganfuda prison, 10 kilometres from Benghazi. This is torture, which I do not believe is accounted for in any friendship or institutional agreements.

As highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the non-refoulement principle prevents people being returned to territories where their lives could be considered to be in danger or their freedom could be threatened. Sending these people back to Libya which, I would again remind you, has neither signed nor ratified the Geneva Convention, seems truly unbelievable. Moreover, to add insult to injury, illegal immigration is a criminal offence in Italy so, for example, after the dramatic landing at the end of August in which many Somalis lost their lives, those few, I think four or five Somalis who managed to

reach their destination have, among other things, been accused of immigration and are therefore now being prosecuted under Italian law.

I call on the Commission now to take real action, to assess whether the Italy-Libya agreement complies with international law and finally bring about a decisive change of course by not supporting the Italian Government's nefarious policy.

Hélène Flautre, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, the last time we held a debate after a tragedy in the Mediterranean was on 1 April.

You will recall that many hundreds of migrants perished off the Libyan coast. We had called for an investigation. To date we have received no information concerning the circumstances of that tragedy.

Since then, as you know, in mid-August, 73 Africans were found dead off Lampedusa. On 25 August, 57 Eritrean migrants were finally rescued after a lengthy spell in Maltese waters. On 31 August, 75 Somalis were refused entry to Libya.

Really, the external borders of the European Union have become murderous. This is the title of a report due out by the NGO 'Migreurop', which I invite all of you, ladies and gentlemen, to obtain and to read assiduously.

Confronted with this situation, Mr Barrot, you refer to some key issues. You refer to the right of asylum, to the right to international protection. You should also refer to the right of any person to leave any country, and to the obligation placed on everyone to help others, whoever they may be. This is international maritime law. These situations are on the increase, and they are also occurring more and more at the border between Turkey and Greece. This is why I do not believe, Mr Barrot, that strengthening Frontex's resources will be the answer to this situation.

I believe that the European Union, today, is up against its own project. The European Union was born out of the refusal to deny others their dignity, and it is to this that it must remain true.

Timothy Kirkhope, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, the Commission's joint EU resettlement programme certainly has noble ambitions, which aim to encourage greater cooperation between national governments regarding the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers. However, as a British Conservative, I do remain worried about its implementation. We do not want to see the continuation of problems like those we have had at Sangatte in France.

I think that cooperation and solidarity across the European Union is, of course, important when discussing the burdens that nations face but we must better distinguish economic migrants from asylum seekers. They obviously have every right to seek sanctuary, but we must also have legislation that does not tie individual nations' hands regarding who is accepted and who gets asylum. A collective approach such as the one the Commission is proposing might undermine each EU nation's ability to decide this.

Meanwhile, though, I think a major priority should be securing the southern borders. Frontex must play a more prominent part in this regard in order to act as a strong deterrent to economic migrants wishing to make the hazardous trip across the Mediterranean. We must act more strongly against the various third countries that irresponsibly encourage those activities. The Commission says it will be national governments that ultimately decide the number of people they accept, and that Britain and other countries will not be forced to accept large numbers of economic migrants that it cannot cope with or cannot support in these economically challenging times. That is necessary and right. Countries like Britain need guarantees that our asylum and immigration policy remains for us to decide and guarantees also that the EU's approach will remain one of open cooperation and not one of compulsion.

Willy Meyer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (ES) Mr President, Mr Billström, Commissioner Barrot, the start of this legislative term offers us an excellent opportunity to rethink our immigration policy.

We currently have an immigration policy that is based on manifest hypocrisy and cynicism. We say that the European project would be impossible without migrant workers, and yet we are criminalising them with legislation such as the Return Directive, which has been aptly named the 'Directive of Shame', and which fails to comply with the principles and values of the European Union.

This policy of trying to make Europe into a fortress at this time of crisis, which is a triple crisis in terms of food, finance and energy, is not understood by everyone, because our work is poor and heading in the wrong direction. If Europe is needed and, in particular, if Europe is needed thanks to migrant workers, then we must

respect all their rights and not make them into criminals, as the European Union is doing. This is simply bringing more pain to families that are just trying to escape war or hunger.

As a result, the best calling card at next spring's summit of Heads of State or Government in Madrid, between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, would be to repeal this 'Directive of Shame', which does not comply with our principles and values and which is not understood by any government, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, from where thousands of migrant workers come to the European Union.

I therefore call for serious consideration to be given to repealing this 'Directive of Shame'.

Gerard Batten, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, the measures under discussion are part of the existing so-called area of justice, freedom and security, of which immigration is a part. This is about a common immigration and asylum policy and, however much the British Government may lie to the British people, we know that they intend that Britain should eventually be bound by it.

But a 'one-size-fits-all' immigration policy will not work for Britain. Britain is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, more densely populated, surprisingly, than India, China or Japan. Net immigration to Britain is now running at about 230 000 people per annum, adding over a million new people to the population every five years. The population will rise from its current 61.4 million, an all-time high, to about 70 million plus in 2031, and then spiral ever upwards. All this growth is due to immigration and births to immigrants.

The UK Independence Party is not opposed to some immigration, but this should be strictly controlled and for the benefit of Britain and not the European Union or anybody else. Britain does not need a common European immigration policy. What we need to do is end mass immigration now and introduce a strictly limited and controlled immigration policy. We should apply the terms of the 1951 Convention on Refugees, which requires them to seek sanctuary in the first designated safe country they come to – which is not a little island off the coast of Europe called Britain.

We should end the promotion of multiculturalism, which is divisive and a recipe for conflict, and assimilate and integrate existing migrants into a common culture with respect for a common set of political and legal institutions. There should be no place in Britain – and, I suggest, anywhere in Europe – for Sharia law.

Louis Bontes (NI). – (NL) Mr President, Frontex is not working. The budget for Poseidon, the operation currently under way, is EUR 11 million. This is pointless. It is money down the drain. Direct returns and a crackdown on the countries that make this immigration possible is the only solution. The common asylum and immigration policy is not in the interests of the Dutch people. The Dutch Party for Freedom, on whose behalf I am speaking, is vehemently opposed to this policy. It will result in even more people with no prospects entering Europe. The Dutch people do not need solidarity, what they need is for us to stand up here for Dutch interests. Let there be an end to it then.

I should like to give a further reaction to the Swedish Presidency. This Presidency takes the view that Europe should further open its borders to mass immigration for the sake of its labour market. The Party for Freedom rejects this out of hand. It is a smoke screen to enable mass immigration. Look at what is happening in the big cities – look at the enormous problems they face. Think about your own people, think about your own country, think about your own culture. We shall be doing so, in any case. I should like to add that enough is enough. Let there be an end to mass immigration; it has gone far enough.

Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, Vice-President of the Commission, President-in-Office of the Council, the challenges in terms of migration remain the same, as too does our commitment to overcome them.

These challenges are as follows: the first is to move towards a common migration policy; the second is to greatly improve the organisation of legal migration; the third is to improve integration procedures; the fourth is to combat illegal or clandestine immigration with absolute determination; the fifth is to develop Frontex further; the sixth is to improve procedures, conventions and agreements with countries of origin and transit; and the seventh is to make progress with a common asylum policy.

The European Asylum Support Office must, in 2010, become a fair, genuine and egalitarian office, which shares out the responsibility in a way that ensures solidarity and which offers international or subsidiary protection going forward.

As regards Frontex, it is a matter of coordination and cooperation; under no circumstances is it a replacement for national competences. The need to increase Frontex missions to the south of our borders, in southern Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic front, is not just the European Union's response to the migratory pressure developing in Greece, Malta, Italy or Spain; it is also a humanitarian response to prevent death and avoid drama.

Just look at what has happened with the Frontex budget: it has gone from EUR 6 million in 2005 to EUR 78 or 83 million in 2010. However, Mr President, our concern is that Frontex is incapable of managing the budget that Parliament has given it. This would be unacceptable, because there are many challenges and missions to be tackled.

It is vital that Frontex breathes life into CRATE, the Centralised Record of Available Technical Equipment. It is also vital that the Member States' commitment to CRATE becomes effective. We need to have more and better coordination with Europol. We need to manage Iconex and, Mr President, in terms of safeguarding human rights, we need to have more and better coordination between Frontex and the International Organisation for Migration and also the UNHCR.

These are the challenges and these are our commitments.

Claude Moraes (S&D). – Mr President, no one underestimates the enormous difficulties of creating the balance mentioned by the chair of our committee, and of the migration pressures which face the European Union and the pressures that we face in the Mediterranean. Yet again this summer, we have been reminded of the harsh reality faced by migrants and asylum seekers facing persecution and fleeing poverty.

Frontex undoubtedly plays a key role in Europe's approach to migration. As we build a more coordinated EU system for managing our external borders, the importance of Frontex increases. Therefore, my group believes that it is crucial to get the balance right: the balance between, on the one hand, resourcing Frontex – as many colleagues have mentioned – and, on the other hand, ensuring that Frontex has a stronger appreciation of the humanitarian aspects of its work. For example, how can Frontex help bring down the tragic number of deaths at sea, over 12 000 in the last 10 years? Sea rescue operations have therefore to be included in its remit. The devil is in the detail. Many of these policies need to work on the ground, and I know that Parliament, Commission and Council are trying to do this.

We must ensure that Frontex does not simply become a mechanism for keeping people out of Europe. Those who are legitimately in need of protection must be granted access to EU territory.

Commissioner, you spoke about the principle of non-refoulement. It is important that you restated it. The situation for Italy and Libya is, of course, something which my colleagues from Italy will speak more about, but this principle must not be violated by anyone or any country.

We are in a situation where non-refoulement will happen even with countries which have not signed the 1951 Convention. It is important that we uphold these human rights. We must not shy away from our responsibilities to provide protection to those who need it.

Frontex therefore needs to be part of a fair and balanced approach to migration and asylum. We must ensure that the asylum package is implemented, and we must ensure that legal migration and the protection of refugees are held in balance.

Sarah Ludford (ALDE). – Mr President, the British press, assisted to such a conclusion by paranoid and Euro-sceptic MEPs, has scaremongered that a future Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, which Mr Barroso has accepted at the proposal of the ALDE Group, will force the UK to accept more asylum seekers from across Europe.

This is not true. As Vice-President Barrot has confirmed, the pilot project to assist Malta is voluntary and the proposed scheme to resettle UNHCR-approved refugees directly from outside Europe would also be non-compulsory.

No element of EU policy has ever involved quotas or compulsion on national acceptance of migrants. However, what we do try and get is voluntary solidarity, and I do hope that a future Fundamental Rights Commissioner will make a contribution to stopping migrants meeting their death in the Mediterranean.

Ten years ago next month, the EU set the goal of a common asylum system and coordinated migration policies. Despite some considerable efforts, especially by the European Commission with the support of MEPs, we are clearly a long way from that.

The top priority is to get some proper management of the flows, which are usually what are called 'mixed flows' of refugees and job-seeking migrants, so as to distinguish between the two. This is to give confidence to the European public of proper management as well as to stop loss of life and to ensure protection for those qualifying for it.

If people in frail boats are pushed back out to sea and never assessed for protection, none of those goals is achieved. I am shocked to hear from Commissioner Barrot that Member States do not apply maritime law uniformly. Such disarray is unacceptable. Frontex must be properly resourced and respect human rights of individuals. Those individuals must be allowed to land and be assessed for asylum status and sorted into refugees and those not qualified to stay.

EU Member States must, if necessary, be taken to the European Court of Justice for failing to do so, and the idea, as my colleague Sonia Alfano has said, that Libya is capable of doing that job instead is completely outrageous given its gross human rights abuses.

A rational European immigration policy would involve some common framework of criteria for economic migration within which Member States accepting such migrants can operate under their own decisions on the numbers they take. What we need is the coordination, the common standards, the common framework and then the solidarity as well.

Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I do not really share your enthusiasm about Frontex. We have heard reports from Frontex as well as from Member States that they have violated human rights, the right to non-refoulement and given no possibility for refugees to apply for asylum, and those violations of human rights are done in the name of the European Union.

Minister Billström, you have said that we need some checks and balances on our external borders but, I ask you, why cannot we have some checks and balances on those people who are working and defending our external borders? Why cannot we have some transparency and clarity about Frontex and what they are doing? We need clarity and transparency in this House, in the European Parliament, about Frontex's deeds. We need clarity about what is the stage of the procedure of the new rules of Frontex that you mentioned, Commissioner, and we need some clarification about how refugees can obtain international protection when they are intercepted at sea.

We also need transparency about the deals that are being made with third countries and what happens exactly to the EU money that is being put into Libya, for example. I doubt whether what you called Libya's assistance to refugees is actually helpful to refugees but here again, we are just lacking transparency and if, as you said, not even Member States interpret the rights of migrants the same way as you do, then how are you going to make sure that third countries such as Libya are going to follow your sort of interpretation?

I would like to remind you that Parliament has always supported the idea of making the sharing of responsibility to deal with asylum applications obligatory, and I think your report of the pilot project where only France took a very, very small, almost ridiculous, number of 100 refugees from Malta shows that we are not getting far with the voluntary solidarity. We need some obligation here.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) We want to fight immigration. It is a great problem. In the meantime, our notice board and computer are going wrong. Let us tackle the things which we can really tackle effectively.

Migration is, of course, one of the greatest problems facing Europe today. What is more, it is a problem not just for us politicians, but it is also a problem for the people of the European Union's Member States. It is, perhaps, one of the main challenges currently facing the political class in Europe, and one of the main problems of our electors. Immigration has more than one name, because my esteemed fellow Members have spoken today about immigration from Africa, which mainly affects the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, and what they said is, in a certain sense, justified. I represent a country – Poland – where this illegal immigration is, of course, smaller, but people come to us from the countries of the former Soviet Union, and some from Asia.

We are faced with a question about the philosophy of the EU's fight against illegal immigration, and – let us put it simply – also against restrictions on legal immigration. Does Frontex have to bear the brunt of this fight? Is this really advisable? Would it not be more effective for the extra money which we want to give

Frontex to be allocated to the countries which have the greatest problem with illegal immigration, and also to EU Member States whose borders are part of the EU's external borders? Mr President, it seems to me, as I finish, that this would be more advisable.

Rui Tavares (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr Billström, Mr Barrot, we have no choice regarding the Geneva Convention and human rights. Our only option is to comply with the conventions that we have signed. The law is clear: sending refugees who arrive on European shores to countries that have not signed the Geneva Convention on refugees is a violation of the Geneva Convention. This is not an abstract point of law; it is a real argument.

When, through Frontex or the Member States, we send refugees to Libya, we are in breach of the convention, not least because we know from the Italian Government's own figures that 75% of the people who reach European shores apply for asylum, and 50% of those – about 38%, or a third of the total – are entitled to humanitarian protection.

Political choices lead to moral choices, and right now we are faced with a moral choice. Is it right, is it really moral, that more than 14 000 people have died trying to reach the coast of Europe in recent years? Is it really moral that a large proportion of those people who risk their lives should be entitled to asylum in the first place? Is it really necessary that they should have to risk their lives? No, they should not have to do so.

We have been saying for a long time that a purely repressive immigration policy, such as the one that has been followed, presents us with these life or death choices for people's lives and makes us all jointly responsible for each life or death choice.

It is not by throwing money at Frontex now, at the beginning of its mandate – money that Frontex cannot spend and that the Commission says it is inadvisable to give to Frontex at this time – it is not by doing this that we will solve the problem. The way in which we can solve the problem is by re-examining Frontex's mandate, and then Frontex might need more money. For that to happen, Frontex would have to cooperate and provide the UNHCR with full information; for that to happen, Frontex would have to include humanitarian concerns in its policies, which it does not do at the moment. Just as serious, ladies and gentlemen, is the proposal regarding refugee funds: while we are investing more in Frontex, these funds are being cut back.

Roberta Angelilli (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, frankly I am annoyed that certain Italian fellow Members have not wasted the opportunity to reopen the same old controversy, with the sole aim of attacking the Italian Government. When it comes to immigration, we should no longer engage in ideological manipulation, but go to the heart of the guidelines set out by the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which is based on the values of integration and solidarity.

I genuinely appreciate the Commission's efforts in recent years, but Commissioner Barrot will agree with me when I say that we need to speed things up to create a true European strategy on immigration, which prioritises the uncompromising fight against illegal immigration and the trafficking and exploitation of human beings.

We must take firm action against all those who profit from this trafficking, including employers who use illegal labour. Certainly, it is no longer acceptable to allow immigration to be a problem shouldered only by the border countries of the Mediterranean basin. The Commission's recent proposal for a joint reintegration programme is a step forward in terms of political and practical cooperation between Member States, but we urgently need to implement a series of initiatives to develop more effective intra-Community solidarity.

That is why we are waiting for the announcement made by the President-in-Office of the European Union to become reality soon, an announcement echoing, among other things, a heartfelt plea by the Italian Minister, Franco Frattini, to launch a debate so that we can find a way to share fairly among Member States the burdens and responsibilities associated with the flows of illegal immigrants and political asylum seekers.

This is the key point, in my view, because otherwise we end up in the paradoxical situation whereby some Member States, including Italy, Malta, Greece and Spain, are obliged to receive illegal immigrants, whereas others hide behind the discretionary concept of solidarity on a voluntary basis. They cannot hide from this any longer. I would like to thank France which has offered to accept 100 people, 100 asylum seekers: 100 people, but that is out of the thousands, tens of thousands of asylum seekers. I therefore thank France, but it is a drop in the ocean.

I will conclude by saying that, among other things, we can no longer view immigration as a panacea. In the absence of a serious cooperation policy for development, where Europe must take a leading role, we will be condemning part of the world to a certain and inevitable future of poverty and despair.

Stavros Lambrinidis (S&D). – (EL) Minister, Commissioner, Parliament has urgently called for cooperation at European level with immigrants' countries of origin and transit. These countries do not only include Libya. They also include Turkey. Apart from being a country of origin and transit within this framework, Turkey is also a candidate country. In other words, one could say that it has a dual obligation to respect the political principles and the institutions of the European Union.

In at least four cases recently, Frontex helicopters were jammed by Turkish radar in Greek airspace while performing their duties. In fact, yesterday, a Turkish fighter plane threatened to force a Frontex helicopter to turn back.

What do you intend to do and how will you react on behalf of the European Union to this harassment during action by a European institution such as Frontex?

Also, compulsory solidarity cannot only take the form of Frontex-type policing measures in the southern states. There must also be solidarity in terms of accepting immigrants arriving in our countries, which cannot sustain such large numbers every time. Here, the Commission and Council are promoting voluntary solidarity, which is not worth the paper it is written on. Can you tell us why you are not introducing compulsory solidarity here too?

Finally, the pilot programme between Italy, Malta and Libya should not be the only pilot programme. Why is there no pilot programme for turning immigrants back in Turkey, which is a gaping wound in terms of this particular problem? Has the Greek Government ever asked for this, Commissioner, and you refused it? Or did Libya, Italy and Malta simply come along and you accepted them without making any other requests?

Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, this gives me an opportunity to clarify two small points which, I believe – and as one of my fellow Members said just now – highlight the hypocritical nature of our policy.

The first point concerns the Dublin agreements. Commissioner, you know the situation in Calais well; you know that, in Calais, many people could easily apply for and obtain political refugee status. Why do they not do so? Because, as a result of the Dublin agreements, they are guaranteed to be sent to countries to which they do not want to go, and sometimes for excellent reasons. They do not want to go to Greece, where they have practically no chance of receiving refugee status.

Today, the Dublin agreements are an instrument that is hostile to the protection of those people who need them most and which create inequality among the Member States. So let us stop talking about solidarity, when instruments are put in place that create inequality among the States.

The second point concerns the readmission agreements. I fully understand, the aim is to negotiate these agreements with Turkey and with Libya, that is, to toy with the idea of having one huge environment of countries that are our neighbours and huge camps for holding the migratory flows. This is unacceptable for practical reasons, for moral reasons and for political reasons, and you know it, Mr Barrot!

Clemente Mastella (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will immediately start by saying, without exaggeration, that for me, hospitality is a sacred value. Ultimately, it is solidarity between people which gives rise to the communities of a state, which are regulated by means of certain special obligations: rights and duties. Therefore as far as I am concerned, I am firmly opposed to anything that runs counter to this basic biblical principle. Clearly, it is the action of taking people in and also the ways in which we need to do this which combine to give rise to integration and all it entails.

What can we do? Where should we locate these desperate people who arrive in the Member States and, at the same time, how should we eliminate that ensuing friction which we sometimes see as resentment, anger and rage, leading to rather worrying forms of antagonism?

What should we do to ensure that safeguarding the right to asylum, a principle which has been cited in recent days too, does not, at the same time, leave the door open for fraudulent asylum seekers, which is the alibi certain people use: people who hide behind this universal right and who have nothing to do with the right to asylum, but everything to do with illegality and crime?

Do we really think, Mr Billström, that all this responsibility can be shouldered by individual states? Until now, Europe has very probably acted with some uncertainty, but it seems to me that it can no longer put off establishing a united, serious approach to immigration. It cannot speak as it has been doing, with many discordant voices, and cannot force the most exposed and vulnerable individual frontline states into isolation.

It cannot do so without a common position reached collectively, one which so far, we have not had, but whose essential principles are continually defended.

It cannot, Mr President, fail to see its borders as a European issue instead of an issue for individual states. It cannot engage, as has already happened in this Chamber, in crude, theatrical performances in the argument over what the Italian Government or other governments are doing. For me, it is clearly unthinkable that the tragedies that have occurred off the coast of Lampedusa and in Ceuta and Melilla have nothing to do with Brussels, Berlin and Paris.

Tension between the individual states and Europe stems from this and is causing problems, and this is also increasing Europe's democratic deficit, which is only set to get worse in the absence of a coordinated policy on immigration; it is heightening the impression that the self-interests of states prevail over the greater good. It is intensifying, Mr President, the frustrating perception that Brussels and Strasbourg all too often deal with obscure issues and not those which concern the public. Ultimately, it is undermining Europe's political identity.

This is why I hope that the Swedish Presidency will begin to establish an agreement with the most vulnerable countries in order to think logically and bring about what has been lacking until now, namely a robust, balanced, sound and rigorous common policy on immigration.

David-Maria Sassoli (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, Mr Barrot, Mr Billström, ladies and gentlemen, we called for this debate to draw the EU's attention to the grave violations of fundamental human rights taking place in Italy. Since May, over 1 000 migrants have been picked up at sea by the Italian authorities and handed over to Libya in the course of informal and indiscriminate refoulements without identifying the people, giving them the right to appeal or access to asylum procedures, with the danger that they will be subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment in Libya. As Commissioner Barrot confirmed when he asked Italy for details, we believe that these practices violate the fundamental principles which underpin Europe.

This kind of action is compatible neither with the European Convention on Human Rights nor with Community law, particularly the Schengen Borders Code and the Repatriation Directive, nor with Italian law. Yesterday, the United Nations called on Italy to comply with international law and, also yesterday, 24 Somali and Eritrean refugees turned away by Italy lodged an appeal against Italy at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for violating the European Convention on Human Rights.

Moreover, ladies and gentlemen, illegal immigration in Italy has become a criminal offence, an aggravating circumstance. The mere fact of being a migrant entails discrimination and inequality, and gives rise to harsher punishments for the same crime. The fact of being an illegal migrant, as were the families of our Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Greek and Italian communities, blocks access to fundamental rights and to the most basic care, including health services, for fear of being reported. This is happening in Italy, Mr President, and has also been denounced by legal and constitutional experts and secular and Catholic associations.

What does the Commission intend to do to end these violations? Parliament has always supported the fight against illegal immigration, but only in compliance with fundamental rights.

We would like to know, Mr President, whether the Commission intends to take action on Italian legislation and examine the Italy-Libya agreement. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we cannot allow certain governments to build new ones.

Niki Tzavela (EFD). – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, reality goes beyond anything said in this House.

We see President Gaddafi entertaining this issue and the international media constantly reporting that EUR 1 billion is needed if it is to honour its obligations. We see Turkey – a state which wants to accede to the European Union – turning back Frontex aircraft on a daily basis and the European Union failing to react as it should.

We see traffickers who move illegal immigrants giving them instructions on how to shoot themselves in the arm or leg in the event of arrest, so that the Member States are obliged to adopt and apply a different type of legislation to that which governs illegal immigration, because they are now injured persons. We see traffickers giving illegal immigrants instructions to destroy their papers before they enter a country, so that host countries such as Greece have no idea where to send them; we see immigrants claiming that they are seeking asylum, but have no papers so that we can establish the facts.

Chaos prevails, Commissioner, and order needs to be restored at some point with a strict and firm stand on the part of the European Union on this issue.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Vice-President, ladies and gentlemen, we hear it said repeatedly that the Member States acknowledge the need to establish common immigration management policies at European level and policies aimed at the social integration of immigrants.

However, as we see every day, the reality is far removed from that. For example, within the context of the budgetary discussions, the Fund for the integration of migrants has seen a drastic reduction in its resources. As for the Member States, many of them continue unilaterally to impose strict legislation and regulations on movement to and on their territory, to restrict access to their labour markets, social systems and educational systems, and to make family reunification difficult.

In the same way, European policy on the fight against illegal immigration and on external border control ultimately amounts to passing the responsibility for border control on to our neighbours, in defiance of human rights. We have seen this happen between Italy and Libya.

This tendency to externalise issues ultimately allows Europe to free itself from its responsibilities. This is unacceptable. The additional resources given to Frontex will never be a substitute for the necessary solidarity that must unite the Member States, enabling them to act together in accommodating people who need international protection, and in accommodating a foreign labour force that is needed to meet the democratic challenges of the future.

What provisions are you making to ensure real solidarity and real solutions to the suffering of migrants?

Rita Borsellino (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, Mr Barrot, Mr Billström, ladies and gentlemen, in recent days, when setting out the European asylum plan, you yourself, Mr Barrot, talked of steadfastness in the fight against illegal immigration and of humanity when receiving the victims of persecution. Translated into legal terms, this means ensuring protection and the right to asylum for those fleeing starvation, war and persecution, and preventing their expulsion to countries where their lives are in danger or they risk inhumane treatment.

This is basically the opposite of what the Italian Government is doing, as demonstrated by the latest worrying refoulement of 75 immigrants from Eritrea and Somalia to Libya, which happened without at least checking whether there were any potential asylum seekers, as required by international law and as denounced yesterday by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. An agreement between Italy and Libya cannot transform that stretch of the sea into a free zone where human rights are violated.

I therefore call on the Commission to take action as soon as possible to ensure that the rules of international law are restored and complied with. Furthermore, I would like to know what progress has been made in the negotiations on the bilateral agreement between the EU and Libya, already underway for a number of years. When do you expect to conclude it? Can the Council and the Commission confirm that this agreement would prevail over the Italy-Libya one? Can you explain to Parliament the key points relating to tackling illegal immigration and guaranteeing the right to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement?

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE). – Mr President, it is a great joy for me to take the floor for the first time in this Plenary to commend Minister Tobias Billström for his deep understanding – and, as an Italian national originally, I am in a position to say that – of the grave situation facing the Mediterranean people and countries.

I would like to welcome his efforts to reach a consensus for a common European migration policy, which is very much needed. I would also like to welcome his initiative for the asylum support officer, which is a very practical and concrete way to support Member States who feel burdened and to start cooperation among Member States.

I would like to ask Minister Billström if, other than the measures he has already talked about, he could maybe elaborate further, from a long-term point of view, about what measures we can take to support the Mediterranean countries and people, with his approach, which balances humanity, solidarity and firmness against any form of illegality.

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, without doubt, we need a common immigration policy and we need to reinforce our cooperation with third countries and make it more cohesive and effective. Within this cooperation, as the debate has illustrated, Libya and Turkey have prime position.

Turkey's conduct is provocative. They are repeatedly obstructive and I want to make that known in the House and to send Mr Barrot the message that they are obstructing Frontex helicopters and aircraft when they are on European missions and on European duties. The New Democracy MEPs have exercised parliamentary scrutiny. Mr Barrot, you will receive detailed notice of these cases of provocation and of Turkey's provocative conduct.

As for readmission and relocation, we must reinforce Frontex still further and organise joint return flights. Mr Barrot, Mr President, please hurry up and visit Turkey and Libya. The problem is very acute. Do not leave it until the end of the year. Today or tomorrow ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Barbara Lochbihler (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, border officials of European states are forbidden to turn away potential asylum seekers who arrive by sea or to escort them away, prevent them from travelling further or return them to countries which do not form part of the EU. This is laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights. Today, we have once again heard numerous examples of how Frontex does not comply with these rules in practice. For this reason, we need controls in this area. We need these controls as Members of the European Parliament, because it is our responsibility to ensure that the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights are observed.

My question to you is as follows: To what extent are we able to monitor whether border officials in international waters are complying with these legal requirements relating to human rights? For years we have been aware that Frontex has violated human rights in individual cases. However, in all its activities, it is also seriously undermining the credibility of the EU when it comes to the protection of human rights.

Alf Svensson (PPE). – (SV) Mr President, thank you Mr Billström. I wonder if, at times, we do not become a little too fixated on the words 'illegal immigration'. After all, it cannot be illegal to flee for your life, since human rights and freedoms apply to everyone, wherever they live.

I would like to emphasise that it is also vital to find out what conditions are like in the countries that people are fleeing from. Perhaps the EU could be more active and do more in those countries so that people do not need to flee only to subsequently be labelled illegal immigrants. Perhaps, as I said before, we are too fixated on the word 'illegal'. As I say, it is perfectly legal to stand up for human rights and freedoms both inside and outside the EU.

Antonio Cancian (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this morning it was almost like being at the Italian Parliament with you in the chair. In any case, I believe that immigration means security and respect for human rights. Unfortunately though, globalisation and the enlargement of the European Union to 27 countries have happened in too much of a rush without taking the appropriate steps to safeguard security and respect for human rights.

I listened to the Commission: the strategy is sound and the future action is excellent, but we are forgetting that the issue is pressing and dramatic and that we have an emergency situation. What was said this morning holds true in a normal situation, but today – especially in Italy – the situation is not normal. I therefore urge the Commission to pay more attention to the tactics than to the strategy and to view the problem as entirely European. Thank you.

President. – The president in the chair right now is certainly Italian, but the debate was far from being purely Italian. Fortunately it was, shall we say, wide-ranging and enjoyed contributions from various quarters and different viewpoints from within the European Union.

Tobias Billström, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Mr President, first of all, I would like to thank you all for a very interesting debate. A lot of valuable opinions have been expressed here today. I would like to mention Mr Busuttil's views on greater cooperation with Libya. I hope to be able to visit Libya along with Commissioner Barrot in order to build relations with this country, and the work with Turkey will also continue. I also agree with Mr Aguilar, Chairman of the Committee on Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, that one way to tackle illegal immigration is to open the way for legal immigration. That would relieve the pressure on the asylum system, for example.

The criminal networks that exploit people's desperation must be tackled. The Swedish Presidency will organise a special conference in Brussels on this issue and the fight against human trafficking. It is the absolute priority of the Swedish Presidency to try to reach agreement regarding the European Asylum Support Office and to

improve practical cooperation. Naturally, we are hoping for the support of the European Parliament in this matter.

I would like to say to Mrs Alfano that it is important that the legal acts adopted by the European Council are complied with and that all Member States implement them as decided. It is also important to involve the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in our work in order to achieve the high quality that we are aiming for. I must also say that I agree with Mr Kirkhope's assessment of the importance of distinguishing between asylum and the immigration of workers. This reasoning leads us, naturally, to the conclusion that the EU needs a common European asylum system and also better opportunities for the legal immigration of workers based on national needs, legal certainty and protection against wage dumping and social exploitation.

If we have this we will not need the policies of Messrs Meyer, Batten or Bontes. We need a sensible and well thought-out migration policy to improve the demographic structure of the EU and to strengthen the economy and people's welfare.

Mrs Corazza Bildt and Mr Svensson addressed the issue of how we should deal with the mortalities in the Mediterranean. There is no single solution to the migration problem. It requires a package of various initiatives within different areas. Increased cooperation with the countries of origin and transit is particularly important. For example, development cooperation with these countries needs to increase in order to create stability, security and sustainability.

The countries of origin and transit and the Member States must also improve their sea rescue. The division of responsibility between the countries with regard to sea rescue efforts also needs to be clarified. We also need to arrive at a common interpretation of the sea rescue regulations in terms of the right to international protection, on the one hand, and the international law of the sea, on the other.

Finally, on behalf of myself and the Presidency, I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to come here to the European Parliament to present our views. It is important to emphasise that our strategy must be based on multiple elements and initiatives. I think that this debate has clearly shown that. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Jacques Barrot, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (FR) Mr President, this debate has demonstrated, if demonstration were needed, the scale of these migration problems.

I would point out that our approach must be balanced between the rejection of illegal immigration, which, I might add, is often attributable to smugglers and traffickers; the desire, in respect of this fight against illegal immigration, to promote a certain kind of legal migration, a decision which rests with the Member States; and also the desire to preserve, in any case, the duty of asylum.

First of all, I should like to respond very briefly on the Frontex issue, and to point out that we are preparing a proposal amending the regulation on Frontex and its working methods. I have certainly noted the desire for greater transparency that has been expressed.

On the other hand, we are also going to try to clarify the rules that should help to ensure that Community law and international law are applied consistently within the context of Frontex operations.

With regard to the Italian problems, I must say that, in July, we sent a letter to the Italian authorities requesting any useful information on the return of the boats intercepted in international waters. We have just received a reply from the Italian authorities, which our services are now examining in great detail.

I would add that Community legislation demands that the Member States conduct border control operations in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement. This principle means that a State must refrain from returning people to a territory in which they could run the risk of being subjected to torture, punishments, or inhumane or degrading treatment. In the case of asylum seekers and refugees, return cannot take place where their lives and freedom may be threatened on the grounds of their race, religion or nationality. In short, we are ensuring that this duty of protection is upheld.

Finally, I should like to reiterate our desire, with Mr Billström, to engage with Libya, on the one hand, and with Turkey, on the other, in a real dialogue that will allow us to get to the bottom of matters, to be able to cooperate on border control in order to prevent illegal migration, but also to see how, with the support of the High Commissioner for Refugees, we can try to initiate procedures in these Mediterranean countries that

will mean that genuine asylum seekers do not have to resort to smugglers or traffickers in order to reach European shores and will see their asylum applications processed in those countries.

This, then, is a major dialogue that is going to take up this last quarter. I would like to thank the Swedish Presidency for its willingness to cooperate so effectively.

To conclude, I should like to reiterate that we need a European strategy on migratory movements. We feel that the Member States really must show more of this solidarity with each other. The Member States are affected by the same problems. It must be said that illegal immigration ultimately affects all the Member States, not just those on the outer borders.

I consider it truly important to establish this solidarity. We are proposing that this be done on a voluntary basis, but this voluntary basis will, without doubt, have to be formalised as a genuine response to the problems.

There you have it; I am not going to prolong these answers. I have taken many notes during the various speeches that have been made.

I should like to finish with a somewhat urgent appeal to the European Parliament to help us, in particular, regarding this strategy, this European asylum policy. I would point out – since the matter has been raised – that we wished to improve the application of the Dublin agreement by allowing some flexibility. We have sought permission from the Council and Parliament to set up this support office by the end of the year, and we are also going to prepare for the harmonisation of the instruction procedures. All of this makes for a real European asylum policy that I feel is entirely consistent with the values on which, in my view, there is consensus in Europe. We believe in these values. They must be translated into action.

I am grateful, in any case, to the European Parliament for helping us in this difficult task.

(Applause)

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), in writing. – (IT) Illegal immigration is a veritable scourge which has afflicted mainly the southern countries of the EU, particularly Italy, Malta and Spain, for several years. It is well known that among all the EU Member States, it is the Italian Government which receives the highest number of illegal immigrants, desperate people principally from Africa, in search of a better future.

Contrary to the claims made by exponents of the Italian left who, for the umpteenth time, have made improper use of the European Parliament to launch unjustified attacks against the Italian Government led by Mr Berlusconi, the preliminary reception centres provide medical care, board and lodging as well as legal aid for as long as it takes to determine whether an illegal immigrant may remain in Italy or whether, in accordance with international agreements, he or she must be repatriated.

We urgently need to adopt effective Community measures on immigration and asylum. We cannot seriously imagine that Italy is able to shoulder all the burdens associated with a phenomenon set to increase exponentially.

Some Members have voiced the idea of establishing 'illegal immigrant quotas'. This is a case of good intentions sadly not backed by concrete political will: only recently, the Swedish Presidency highlighted the difficulty of gaining acceptance for these quotas.

Louis Grech (S&D), in writing. – I welcome this debate, which brings attention to the fragmented and inconsistent EU policies on border control, immigration and asylum seekers. I am glad to hear that the Council and Commission recognise these as priority issues, but so far we have seen only half-measures to address them and no meaningful results. It seems that there is a lack of political will on an EU level to provide adequate resources to tackle these issues in a fair manner. For the moment, Member States with external borders are carrying most of the burden and their situation is worsening by the day due to a lack of resources and capacity. Some good proposals have been discussed lately, such as the revision of the FRONTEX mandate, an EU-wide refugee resettlement scheme and the creation of a European asylum support office. I urge the Commission to act quickly on their implementation. We need more solutions based on a burden-sharing approach as it is the only adequate response. The Commission and Council must show more resolve in providing the necessary funding for FRONTEX. To protect our borders effectively, it should have its own equipment and assets, and operate on a year round basis.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The future extension of the Schengen area to include Romania will increase the importance of ensuring the security of Romania's external borders and, therefore, the role of the FRONTEX agency in Romania. The FRONTEX agency must play an ever-increasing role in the process of improving the monitoring and control of Romania's external borders, representing more than 2 000 km of the EU's external frontier, in other words, the Schengen area's future external border. During the last year, FRONTEX has signed cooperation agreements with Russia and the countries in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as with Ukraine and Moldova. This is a step forward towards managing all borders. One welcome measure, at this point, would be for the European Commission to examine the ways in which FRONTEX could utilise this legal basis. The possibility of signing cooperation agreements with other third countries is another matter which the Commission must explore. Obtaining as many agreements of this kind as possible will facilitate the effective coordination of joint operations and, consequently, contribute to the respect for human rights and civil liberties and to the fight against cross-border crime.

Tiziano Motti (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I agree with Mr Buzek's statement that immigration has always benefited Europe, insofar as this relates to immigration that is regulated, integrated and respects the institutions and laws of the country of destination. When social renewal and labour turnover are needed, when cultural exchange enriches peoples, then immigration is a precious resource. Our Judeo-Christian roots provide us with the notion of charity and hospitality towards those who are suffering.

However, when illegal immigration results in emergency situations, hardship, crime and insecurity, a tangible strategy for integration at levels that countries can sustain in demographic terms becomes necessary. We are fooling ourselves if we believe that the problem is limited to the countries bordering the Mediterranean: the free movement of citizens in the EU can only encourage the free movement of many illegal immigrants who have turned to crime. Every European state has a moral and direct interest since this is related to the issue of crime and the security of the half a billion citizens who have given us a mandate to protect them with urgent, tangible actions, both with regard to existing problems and those which are likely to develop rapidly. The rights of citizens cannot be traded for the general indifference of the Member States or for Solonic warnings by the European Commission.

IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

Vice-President

5. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

5.1. EC/Mongolia Agreement on certain aspects of air services (A7-0001/2009, Brian Simpson)

5.2. EC-China agreement: maritime transport operations; accession of Bulgaria and Romania (A7-0002/2009, Brian Simpson)

5.3. Mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund (A7-0008/2009, Reimer Böge)

5.4. Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (A7-0006/2009, Reimer Böge)

5.5. Draft amending budget No 6/2009 (A7-0003/2009, Jutta Haug)

5.6. Draft amending budget No 7/2009 (A7-0009/2009, Jutta Haug)

5.7. Draft amending budget No 8/2009 (A7-0010/2009, Jutta Haug)

President. – That concludes the vote.

6. Explanations of vote

Written explanations of vote

- Report: Brian Simpson (A7-0001/2009)

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – As a result of judgments by the Court of Justice in the Open Skies cases, the Commission allowed for the replacement of bilateral agreements that had been entered into between some Member States and third countries with Community agreements. The Commission has therefore negotiated an agreement that will replace the bilateral agreements between Mongolia and certain EU Member States.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) This proposal is aimed at replacing certain provisions of bilateral air service agreements concluded in the past by EU Member States and the Government of Mongolia, and deals with aspects that I consider crucial, including technical issues, taxation of fuel, and pricing.

I particularly welcome the importance granted to compliance with Community competition law, since some provisions in earlier bilateral agreements were clearly anti-competitive. I therefore endorse Mr Simpson's report since it follows these general guidelines.

- Report: Brian Simpson (A7-0002/2009)

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – When Romania and Bulgaria entered the EU, it was specified in their act of accession that a protocol would have to be drawn up amending the Agreement on Maritime Transport between the EU and its Member States and China. This vote is in favour of the conclusion of this protocol.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0008/2009)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund in favour of France because I believe this fund helps countries to respond effectively and flexibly to situations created by natural disasters, in this case the storm last January which affected south-western France, causing severe damage. This financial instrument of solidarity is mobilised in cases where the damage caused by a disaster is so severe that national resources are insufficient to respond effectively to the crisis, the aim being to stimulate economic recovery and meet the needs of the Member State affected.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my esteemed German colleague and friend, Mr Böge, calling on the European Parliament to approve the proposal for a decision on mobilisation of the European Union Solidarity Fund to provide approximately EUR 109 million in commitment and payment appropriations in 2009 to help France, the victim of a disaster caused by storm Klaus which, in January 2009, hit 31 departments in the south-west of the country, causing an estimated EUR 4 billion or so of serious damage. I will take advantage of this speech to congratulate Mr Lamassoure, the chairman of our Parliament's Committee on Budgets, on the speed with which he, together with the European Commission's services, has dealt with this matter.

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – In January 2009, a storm took place in south-west France causing severe damage and enabling France to apply for funds from the European Union Solidarity Fund. I voted in favour of the mobilisation of these funds.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In my view, solidarity among Member States in the European Union and, in particular, European support for countries affected by disasters, are a clear sign that the EU is no longer just a free trade area. By adopting special aid instruments like the European Union Solidarity Fund, the Community that we seek to make 'united in diversity' demonstrates its ability to remain united in adversity, even in situations that place high demands on human and material resources. That is something I sincerely welcome.

I hope the Solidarity Fund is not used very often, as it will mean that Europe is not suffering from many serious emergencies, but I also hope that its structure and availability are increasingly improved and frequently reassessed so that it can meet any real demands swiftly and without red tape.

I must mention the fires that have ravaged my country, particularly in 2003, and I acknowledge how important and useful mechanisms like this fund have been. I believe the particularly serious times that France went through in January this year justify mobilisation of the fund. The overwhelmingly positive vote in the Committee on Budgets confirms that this is a good measure.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the intervention of the European Union Solidarity Fund – from which France will benefit – to help right the damage caused by the storm of January 2009, which hit the European and French forestry sector hard. The amounts granted should be available by October 2009; in other words, nine months after the storm. This intervention is quicker than the average time taken for the Fund to intervene, which is around one year from the time of the disaster to the payment of aid.

While it is right to welcome this progress, it is worth continuing to call for the fund to be made available more quickly. The current procedure for managing the Solidarity Fund makes this difficult. Nonetheless, a revised proposal for a regulation was tabled by the European Commission and supported by a large majority of Parliament in May 2006. I regret that the Council has still not taken up this matter and I would encourage it now to consider, as soon as possible, the possibility of bringing the European Union Solidarity Fund into operation more quickly.

- Report: Reimer Böge (A7-0006/2009)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my esteemed German colleague and friend, Mr Böge, calling on the European Parliament to approve the proposal for a decision on mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to provide EUR 4.1 million in commitment and payment appropriations to help the Spanish and Portuguese textile sectors (Catalonia and Norte-Centro regions). The aim is to provide aid for the workers affected by the consequences of the significant changes in the structure of international trade and to help them re-enter the labour market. I share my colleagues' view about speeding up mobilisation of this fund and about assessing its complementarity with other existing instruments such as the Social Fund.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to provide additional support to Portuguese workers affected by redundancies in the textile sector and who suffer the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns.

The mobilisation of EUR 832 800 from the fund is aimed at reintegrating workers into the labour market by means of personal employment plans, drawn up together with the workers, which include personal skill development and strategies for entering the labour market.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) EU support, particularly from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, is fundamental in helping those who have lost their jobs due to the relocations that have occurred in a globalised market. In recent years, especially as a result of the world economic crisis, Portugal has been feeling the effects of the problem of how to reabsorb and reintegrate the unemployed into the labour market.

Countless firms have relocated to take advantage of the lower labour costs found in China and India, for example, with dire consequences for the entire national economy. The approval of EGF money to help these workers is vital not only for improving their personal and family situations, but also for the whole national economy, because the aim of these exceptional measures in the longer term is to help these workers to find and keep a new job.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour because I believe this support is important for Portuguese workers. I feel, however, that Portugal's application was not ambitious enough. The Portuguese Government asked the EGF for EUR 8 33 for each worker made redundant in the textile sector, whereas Spain applied for EUR 3 006 per worker in the same sector.

I also find it somewhat surprising that, in the midst of an economic crisis with rising unemployment, in which the effects of globalisation can be felt, the EGF has received and accepted so few applications from the Member States. In fact, the EGF has EUR 500 million available for all the Member States this year, and to date only about EUR 60 million has been utilised.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We voted in favour of this report, since the European Parliament is giving the green light for Portugal to receive EUR 832 800 to help workers made redundant in the textile

industry in Portugal's Norte and Centro regions. This is a tiny sum, however, and it is merely a palliative measure, given the severe unemployment experienced in Portugal today, particularly in those regions.

As we all know, Portugal applied to the European Commission for this money in January this year, and it relates to 1 588 redundancies reported between February and November 2008 in 49 textile companies in the northern and central regions of the country.

Approval has also been given, however, for EUR 3 306 750 to support 1 720 workers dismissed from 30 textile companies in Cataluña, Spain.

What was really needed, though, was a policy to support production, particularly in the textile sector, to prevent further company closures and further redundancies.

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) While I agree with the basic principle, I believe that the seriousness of the crisis calls for provisions on an altogether different scale, not least to allow SMEs access to credit and to have credit that is conducive to employment, territorial development and the development of human capabilities.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) The motions submitted by Spain and Portugal to mobilise the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) once again make clear the consequences of globalisation. In the countries of south-east Asia and, in particular, in the special economic zones, where people are exploited and employed without minimum social standards, textiles are being produced at dumping prices and then sold on the European market.

European companies, which respect the social rights of employees that have been established and acquired over decades, are left at a disadvantage because of the higher costs that they incur as a result. We must stop this development from going any further immediately. A ban must be imposed as soon as possible on the import of products into the EU which are not produced under specific minimum social standards. Until this has been achieved, we can only work to reduce the damage caused by globalisation in the relevant countries. Therefore, I have voted without reservations in favour of releasing aid from the fund.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In recognising the adverse impact of globalisation, which is all too evident in the industrial regions of Europe, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is grounded in the solidarity of the European project and brings it closer to the people by providing assistance for those workers who are worst affected by these changes. Portugal's Norte and Centro regions, where the economy was based on traditional sectors such as the textile industry, have been modernising since the early 1990s in an attempt to adapt to rapidly increasing competition.

The textile industry employs roughly 15% of the labour force in these areas of the country, and almost 98% of the unemployment in the sector across the country is concentrated in these two regions. The worsening economic climate that has harmed these regions, along with others – particularly the outermost regions such as Madeira, where tourism is very important – has had worrying consequences in terms of social cohesion, above all, because of the rise in unemployment. I therefore support the mobilisation of EUR 832 800 from the EGF in the wake of the 1 588 redundancies in the textile industry in Portugal's Norte and Centro regions. This sum must be used wisely for retraining these workers and reincorporating them quickly and sustainably into the labour market.

- Report: Jutta Haug (A7-0003/2009)

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – This concerns the revision of Traditional Own Resources, VAT and GNI and provides for adjustments with reference to economic forecasts. The proposal is extremely technical, so I shall simply declare that my vote has been favourable to this proposal.

- Report: Jutta Haug (A7-0009/2009)

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – During January 2009, the south-west of France was hit by a storm which caused severe damage and therefore allows France access to funds in the EUSF. I am in favour of following the point of view of the rapporteur in accepting the proposed Draft amending budget No 7/2009.

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) I consider it unacceptable to mix together in the same vote the appropriations to promote the bluetongue vaccination and the Europol and Eurojust appropriations. I am in favour of the appropriations to eradicate bluetongue disease, but am against the Europol and Eurojust appropriations.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) In January 2009, France was hit by a severe storm. Storm Klaus caused devastation, in particular to the country's infrastructure. The objective of the Solidarity Fund is to cover part of the cost of damage which has to be paid for out of the public purse. This case meets all the requirements. For this reason, and particularly for reasons of cross-border solidarity with the French citizens who were and, in some cases, still are affected by storm Klaus, I have voted in favour of the Draft amending budget.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the adoption today of the report by our fellow Member, Mrs Haug, to which I gave my full support. With this vote, we are allowing the European Union Solidarity Fund to be mobilised for the second time this year. Indeed, having come to the aid of Romania, the European Union is now showing its solidarity with the French population which, in January 2009, felt the full force of the devastating and very violent storm Klaus, which was described as a 'major natural disaster' and, as such, was eligible for inclusion in the main scope of this Fund. In total, more than EUR 120 million have been made available in this way.

As you know, this aid is sorely needed for the departments in the south-west of my country, which have suffered considerable damage. I would like to thank my fellow Members for voting in favour of this report. It will, of course, be necessary now to ensure that the French Government involves the local authorities fairly in the process and that these authorities are not cheated as regards the way in which this money is used. Indeed, it would be unacceptable if only the private sector were to benefit from it.

- Report: Jutta Haug (A7-0010/2009)

John Stuart Agnew, John Bufton and David Campbell Bannerman (EFD), *in writing*. – We acknowledge the very real need for a bluetongue vaccine, particularly for beef and sheep farmers in the South and East of England who, by wholesale vaccination on their own farms, have created a firewall against bluetongue that their fellow farmers in the North and West have benefited from. In order to vote for EU funding for this vaccine we are obliged (in the same vote) to vote for increased funding for Eurojust and Europol. These are two agencies that operate outside the boundaries acceptable to British law, severely increasing the power of the state at the expense of the liberty of the individual. It is contemptible that the EU attempts to bury such provisions in these types of reports, and then requires MEPs to vote on them as a whole and not individual parts. Thus, we could not in good conscience support such a report, which explains our voting abstention on the subject.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – This report concerned modifications in the budget creating fresh commitments amounting to EUR 51 640 000. These funds will go to the fighting of bluetongue, the creation of a high flux reactor in addition to funds directed to Europol and OLAF. My vote here is consistent with the opinion of the rapporteur.

Derek Roland Clark (EFD), *in writing*. – I acknowledge the very real need for a bluetongue vaccine, and deplore the refusal of the UK Government to assist its farming community on this important issue. This report contained provisions related to this situation. However, this report also contained provisions totally unrelated to farming, which would have had a disastrous impact on the UK. In particular, this report called for funding to Eurojust and Europol, agencies that operate outside of the boundaries acceptable to British law.

It is contemptible that the EU attempts to bury such provisions in these types of reports, and then requires MEPs to vote on them as a whole and not individual parts. Thus, I could not in good conscience support such a report, which explains my vote on the subject.

Nigel Farage (EFD), *in writing*. – I acknowledge the very real need for a bluetongue vaccine, and note the unhelpful attitude of the UK Government on this important issue. This report contained provisions related to this situation. However, this report also contained provisions totally unrelated to farming, which would have had a disastrous impact on the UK.

In particular, this report called for funding to Eurojust and Europol, agencies that operate outside of the boundaries acceptable to British law. It is contemptible that the EU attempts to bury such provisions in these types of reports, and then requires MEPs to vote on them as a whole and not individual parts. Thus, I could not in good conscience support such a report, which explains my vote on the subject.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE), *in writing*. – The Fine Gael members of the EPP Group voted in favour of Draft amending budget No 8/2009. We note that this vote includes the creation of a budget item to provide

supplementary funding to the High Flux Reactor (HFR) at Petten, Netherlands. Originally, the facility was set up to evaluate materials used in fusion and fission reactors. It has become an indispensable facility for the production of radioisotopes for the medical sectors, covering some 60% of European demand. The report also provides support for, among other things, a strengthened budget to eradicate the bluetongue disease and assistance with European policing and anti-fraud. On balance, given the nature of the HFR and the mix of budget items covered, the Fine Gael delegation voted to support Draft amending budget No 8/2009.

Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL), in writing. – I voted in favour of the abovementioned report which includes an increase in loan commitments for programmes aiming at eradicating and tracking animal diseases as well as observing the physical well-being of animals which could present a threat to public health linked to external factors.

At the same time, I would like to emphasise my disagreement with the other issues raised in the report, which should not have been included in this report:

- The creation of budget item 10 04 04 02 (Operation of the high-flux reactor (HFR));
- The creation of budget item 18 05 02 03 (European Police);
- A reinforcement of the Community subsidy to EUROJUST;
- Modifications to the establishment plan of OLAF, without additional financial provisions.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) The report on Draft amending budget No 8/2009 of the European Union for the financial year 2009 includes some contradictory points. It focuses on the increase in resources to eradicate bluetongue disease in sheep, the pursuit of a research programme on the use of a nuclear reactor installed in the Netherlands, the Europol and Eurojust programmes, and OLAF.

In voting against this draft report, I obviously did not wish to take a stand against provisions that are vitally important to sheep farmers.

I wished to take a stand against the ever-persistent use of nuclear power.

Above all, I wished to reaffirm my commitment to combating the construction of a fortress, security-driven and ineffective Europe to ensure the safety of our fellow citizens, via the Europol and Eurojust budgets.

There is a need to curb these policies which, in the name of the fight against insecurity and terrorism, are increasingly undermining the fundamental freedoms and rights of our fellow citizens, and to review and redefine the mandates of the various Community agencies and bodies involved in these policies.

7. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

(The sitting was suspended at 11.20 and resumed at 11.35)

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

8. Inaugural address by the President of the European Parliament

President. – Presidents of the European Parliament, Ministers, Presidents and representatives of the European institutions, ladies and gentlemen, and above all, dear friends.

I stand before you today as the thirteenth President of the directly-elected European Parliament. I am pleased to see a number of former Presidents here among us today: Mr Emilio Colombo, Mr Enrique Barón Crespo, Mr Egon Klepsch, Mr Klaus Hänsch, Mr José María Gil-Robles, Mrs Nicole Fontaine, Mr Pat Cox and Mr Hans-Gert Pötering.

(Applause)

Your presence is a great privilege for us all.

As many of you have said, my election is also symbolic – symbolic of the dream of a united continent held by the citizens in our part of Europe, a dream that has now been fulfilled.

My dear colleagues from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta, I know and understand the concerns, needs and expectations of those who recently joined the Union. I know, because in my country they are the same. However, now we bear a shared responsibility for the future of our continent. The old and new Europe are no more. This is our Europe! We want it to be modern and strong. And we want our citizens to see it as such. This calls for energy and hard work. It is a goal that generations of Europeans have dreamed of and one worthy of the great effort needed to achieve it. I am ready to do that work and make that effort, because those dreams were also my dreams.

(Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin this new parliamentary term, Europe and we ourselves – its representatives – face many challenges. We must meet those challenges. We must remember that, in striving for a better Europe, the European Parliament plays a special role, a role that is not only institutional, but also social, a deeply symbolic role. The European Parliament is the essence of the European democratic system. It is the basis for the permanence and stability of that system, a guardian of the ideals and values embodied not only in our decisions and their effects, but also in our debates. However, the European Parliament has another task to fulfil – the task of creating a vision of a new Europe, a vision which extends beyond the present, beyond what Europe is towards what it should be. In order to create this vision together, we need imagination, knowledge, wisdom and, above all, courage.

Hannah Arendt, a German philosopher of Jewish origin, said that politics is the only area of life, except for religion, where miracles happen. Exactly 20 years ago, we in Europe witnessed such a miracle and that is why we believe in the power of courage, imagination and wisdom. I think that all of us here today share that belief.

(Applause)

I view the challenges that face us with optimism. For me, the important challenges before us are: firstly, the economic crisis and European solidarity; secondly, energy and the environment; thirdly, foreign policy; fourthly, human rights and our system of values; and fifthly, our Parliament and how to reform it.

The most painful and most difficult question facing us is the economic crisis. We must overcome it and we will overcome it. Europe took the lead in proposing solutions to the G8 and G20 summits, solutions which, while preserving our social model, can help the world put its economy to rights. In the face of globalisation, Europe must speak with one voice.

Now more than ever, in this time of crisis, we must focus on economic growth and fighting unemployment. We must breathe fresh life into the ideas of the Lisbon Strategy and find ways of investing in new technologies, innovation, education and human resources. The Community budget has an important role to play in ensuring that European research programmes have clear priorities and procedures.

Under the new Treaty, Parliament and the Council will enjoy equal budgetary powers. The codecision procedure will include agriculture, fisheries, external trade, and justice and home affairs, while also giving us equal responsibilities in the area of agricultural spending.

We must guard against the temptation of protectionism and the renationalisation of common policies. The cohesion policy must remain a priority in the next Community budget if we wish to achieve full integration of our reunited continent. The single market is our great achievement. We must protect it and consolidate it to ensure that Europe remains competitive. This means that European integration must be strengthened, not weakened. Let us have the courage of our convictions.

If we are to revitalise, understand and live in the Community we are building, two things are essential: solidarity and social cohesion. There can be no true community without concern for everyone, especially the most vulnerable – the unemployed, the least educated, those living in remote regions. Fighting unemployment is the main aim of the Swedish Presidency. We shall assist them vigorously in that task.

Behind the Iron Curtain, the cry in the streets was once: 'There can be no freedom without solidarity'. Now we can say: 'Without solidarity there can be no community.' Nor can there be a modern, strong Europe.

(Applause)

We cannot overcome the economic crisis without making use of the vast intellectual, economic and creative potential of women.

The demographic crisis calls for a strengthening of family and fertility. We must also ensure that women do not have to sacrifice their careers for their family and to bring up children.

(Applause)

In order to overcome the demographic crisis, while standing by our democratic principles, we must also be an open community. Immigration has always brought Europe benefits. We must propose solutions that will enable us to invite immigrants and create the conditions for their integration, while also expecting them to be open to such integration.

We are facing an energy crisis. Europeans may not understand geopolitics, but they understand if their heating is turned off. We must continue to diversify our energy resources and step up investment in renewable energy sources and fossil fuels. Nuclear power is available to us and this is a matter for Member States to decide.

We must extend the external pipeline network so as not to be dependent on any particular country. We need to increase the interconnections between our gas and electricity networks. We must also consider the possibility of purchasing gas jointly, so as to establish a genuine European energy market based on solidarity. I believe that the time has come for the Union to have a real common energy policy and I will strive to achieve that.

(Applause)

Energy also prompted the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the seed from which our Community sprang. At that time, Robert Schuman said: 'The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war ... becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible'. This was the original idea behind that Community. Our energy policy must take into account the environmental threats linked to climate change. We need a green revolution and we must curb our own excesses.

The European Parliament is spearheading the debate on this subject. Together with many of you, I worked on the Temporary Committee on Climate Change. You know where I stand and you know that I will work with you to reach a compromise in Copenhagen.

Parliament is an important actor on the international stage. This is what our citizens expect of us. Europe must be more present not only within the borders of the European Union, but also worldwide. Developing a coherent and effective foreign policy which includes a vision of the global order must be one of the great challenges during this Parliament.

Jean Monnet once said that everyone has ambition. The question is whether you use that ambition to become someone, or rather to achieve something. During this Parliament, let us have the ambition to achieve something.

So what are the most important goals? First: an active policy towards the European Union's neighbours in the south and east. With this in view, we should continue our work in the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and take action within the framework of the Euronest Assembly.

Second: we should promote democracy and models of good governance. We should use the interparliamentary assemblies and our delegations to hold parliamentary summits in advance of the Union's bilateral summits. This is important, because the European Parliament will be involved in decisions on a greater number of policies. EUROLAT is a good example of this kind of cooperation.

Third: it is time we had a genuine transatlantic parliamentary partnership, building together a new framework for the world order. I shall strive to forge closer ties with the United States Congress at all levels.

Fourth: we must work on our strategic partnership with Russia, while not forgetting that, as in our relations with China, economic and political considerations cannot take precedence over human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

(Applause)

As President of this Parliament, I shall engage fully in dialogue with our Russian partners, notably in the context of the new Baltic strategy.

Fifth: we must strengthen our relations with India and other emerging powers such as Brazil and the Republic of South Africa. India must be both an economic and a political partner.

Sixth: the Middle East remains the key to global stability. Europe must play an active role in this region.

Seventh: enlargement has been one of our most successful political strategies. Did any of our European forebears ever enjoy such a long period of peace and prosperity as we now have? At present, Croatia, and perhaps Iceland, appear to be the countries closest to accession.

Eighth: the European Union is the world's biggest aid donor. We must examine where we stand with current and potential beneficiaries and not forget our obligations towards them under the Millennium Development Goals. We may close our doors to some who would come here, but let us not close our hearts and let us do what we can to bring life in their home countries closer to the standards we enjoy in Europe.

Ninth: we must strengthen the Union's missions under the European security and defence policy. There have been 22 such missions over the past six years and they should enjoy a clear mandate and the resources needed to do their job. The European Parliament wants to ensure closer control and monitoring of these missions. The wider budgetary powers Parliament will enjoy under the Treaty of Lisbon may improve our flexibility when it comes to allocating resources to the essential missions we support.

The implementation of the new Treaty must be our priority for the immediate future. I am committed to preparing Parliament to function in accordance with the new provisions as soon as the Treaty comes into force. Yet, regardless of the Treaty, we feel the need for change. We feel the need for a more dynamic parliamentary dimension within our institution.

As President of Parliament, I want to draw on the vital work on parliamentary reform begun in recent years by my predecessors. But we must go further down that road. I shall do all I can to make more room for creative political debate within our Parliament.

(Applause)

I firmly support making greater use of the 'catch-the-eye' system for speakers, as a way of enlivening our plenary debates, and use will be made of this system after my speech. This is particularly important in guaranteeing minority rights.

The most important missing link in the reform process is the improvement of relations with the other European Union institutions – the Commission and Council. A significant part of my term of office will be devoted to this.

As President, I shall seek to develop a new model of partnership with the Commission so as to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of the executive and make the executive branch more accountable to this House, as the Treaty of Lisbon directs.

In July, I invited the Commission President to take part in a question time to be held each month in Parliament, during which Members would be able to ask questions from the floor. I propose that we introduce such a practice as soon as possible.

(Applause)

Two weeks ago, President Barroso forwarded to us his 'political guidelines' for a second term. This is a significant innovation, since it marks an acceptance of the fact that it is the European Parliament which elects the Commission President. I take great satisfaction in this.

I have also encouraged the parliamentary committees to examine legislation still in the pipeline and to determine whether the new Commission intends to abandon, amend or maintain its legislative proposals. I am also encouraging the committees to hold serious discussions on future political strategy so as to ensure that the hearings of Commissioners-designate are based on a detailed legislative programme and not just on an assessment of their CVs and professional experience.

We must forge closer relations with the Council of Ministers. If these relations are to be credible, they must reflect the fact that in today's European Union, Parliament is a true co-legislator.

We must also work together on the institutional questions arising from the Treaty of Lisbon. These concern the extension of the codecision procedure, the new comitology system, the appointment of the new High Representative and Commission Vice-President, democratic control over the new external action service and the question of how to deal with the 'dual Council Presidency' during plenary sittings.

Our relations with the 27 national parliaments of the European Union must be developed in the same spirit. In recent years, cooperation has been on the increase and the Treaty of Lisbon will further strengthen these contacts and enhance their role in making citizen-friendly laws. A fine example of this cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments is the Stockholm Programme, with its focus on justice and public security.

I want to push ahead with reforms in the use of Parliament's human resources and expenditure, so that they are focused directly on our programmes.

The richness and strength of our institution also derive from our differences – different nationalities, different ways of thinking and different languages. That is why Members must be able to speak in their mother tongue, if they so wish, so that they can properly represent their voters.

We must always remember that the Union is not only about the challenges of the future and a vision of ever-increasing prosperity and stability. It is, above all, about human rights.

I have noted with concern the tensions in relations between Slovakia and Hungary over national minorities. This remains a major problem, and I should like to offer my assistance in resolving this dispute in accordance with the values in which we firmly believe and which reflect the convictions of our Parliament.

(Loud applause)

A good example of how we uphold these values is the Sakharov Prize awarded to human rights defenders, who now form the basis of a 'Sakharov network', something which I intend to develop further. I should also like to press ahead with the project for a House of European History begun by my predecessor, who is present today, and who is still a Member of the European Parliament, which is something we are very pleased about.

I should also like us to remember once again here in this House that the Union is a community of ideals and values. This is the foundation on which it was built.

I am determined to take measures to ensure that all committees and delegations have access to satellite television and the Internet. We need to look at the way in which European elections are organised. For example, we should insist on the use of new technologies during elections in order to boost turnout. It is also time to open a debate on European political parties. Citizens must know what they are voting for – not only in their own countries, but also at European level.

I attach great importance to cooperation with the Conference of Presidents. Together, we will take responsibility for the work of this House, along with the 14 Vice-presidents, whom I thank for their expressions of support. I also appreciate the spirit of partnership shown by the chairmen of our parliamentary committees. I should like the chairmen of the standing interparliamentary delegations to be able to exert a significant influence over the Union's foreign policy. Matters relating to Parliament's budget will be addressed with the help of the Quaestors. Most of all, however, my dear colleagues, I am counting on your cooperation.

As President of the European Parliament, I know that I am responsible for providing you with good working conditions, but I would strongly urge you all to share this burden.

For most of us, the Treaty of Lisbon represents a long-awaited institutional solution. It will improve the Union's ability to resolve existing problems and will bring the European institutions closer to our citizens.

The late Bronisław Geremek, in whose honour we have named the main courtyard of the Strasbourg Parliament, was fond of saying that European integration was like riding a bicycle: you have to keep pedalling to maintain your balance and to keep going in the right direction. This illustrates precisely why ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is so necessary for us.

(Applause)

Less than a week ago, I was present in the Polish Parliament to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the first non-communist government in our part of Europe, under the leadership of Tadeusz Mazowiecki. It was a particularly moving anniversary, because it marked the beginning of the rapid collapse of the totalitarian system in other Central European countries. It was this first breach which made it possible to bring down the wall dividing Europe.

I am speaking to you here today in Strasbourg, the capital of a region whose fate is reminiscent of that of my own region, Silesia, a border region whose inhabitants have frequently had to change their nationality without changing where they lived.

I solemnly pledge that, as President of Parliament over these coming years, I will serve as your ambassador, bringing the message of a reunited continent to the citizens of Europe and the world.

Let us work together to find real and practical solutions to the great challenges now facing Europe and the world. Let us work to make our dreams come true. Let us set about this task with enthusiasm, wisdom and courage.

Because this is our Europe. A modern Europe. A strong Europe.

(The House accorded the speaker a standing ovation)

Joseph Daul, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Presidents of the European institutions, Mr Buzek, my group fully subscribes to your programme for Parliament and the running of Parliament over the next five years.

If the European Parliament has a role to play, a mission to accomplish, over the next five years, it is indeed to reconcile the citizens with Europe. And what better advantage in this task than to have as President a man who symbolises reunified Europe, a man such as yourself, Mr Buzek.

That is why I would like to say how proud I am that it was my group, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), that persuaded a very large majority of this Parliament to put their trust in you.

This Europe, reunified today, is not about intolerance or exclusion, but about openness and respect for the opinions and the origins of others. I am convinced that this concept of living together as Europeans brings us all together in this House. What I would like is for the European Parliament, under your leadership, to have our fellow citizens share these values.

I also support the determination that you have expressed, Mr President, to rise to this challenge, and I hope that we will make a particular effort in favour of young people. My group has no hesitation in helping you.

Mr President, as you said, this Parliament has acquired powers and increased authority over the last few years. The prospect of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon will increase this trend spectacularly. This is one of the reasons why the PPE Group is calling for its application as soon as possible. We must prepare ourselves for it technically, of course, so that we can work effectively with the Council and in close partnership with the Commission, but we must also and, above all, prepare ourselves for it politically. Our primary objective is clear: to ensure that Parliament is more in tune with the 500 million citizens that it represents.

To do so, it must continue, in particular, to modernise its working methods, for example in the organisation of our debates – you alluded to this. In this regard, I support your proposal to have a lively topical debate with the President of the Commission.

Ladies and gentlemen, the workings of the European Union are difficult to explain to Europeans. Far from the traditional 'opposition/majority' model to which we are accustomed in our Member States, we work here, I would stress, in search of a consensus, beyond the specific convictions of our political families.

That, in my view, is a modern take on political action. I am convinced that our fellow citizens can accept this approach, but on one condition: that we take the trouble to explain to them better the issues at stake in Europe. That is the task that I encourage you, Mr President, to undertake and for which you will receive the full support of my group.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I endorse the comments made by Mr Daul. Mr Buzek, our group can also endorse many, if not all, of the points in the programme which you have presented. This applies to the content of your presentation, to the procedural updates that you have proposed and to the revitalisation of the debate in this House. The broad majority of the Members of this House will agree with the content of the speech that you have given.

I do not fully share Mr Daul's opinion that you have laid down your programme for the next five years. Let us work on the basis of the next two-and-a-half years to start with, because that is a long time.

However, I believe, Mr Buzek, that you are taking over your office at a difficult time for the European Union. You are also taking over your office at a difficult time for the European Parliament. For the first time in a long time, the pro-European consensus is no longer undisputed in this House. On the contrary, this House is, for the first time, a platform – this began in the last parliamentary term and has been reinforced by the most recent European elections – in which forces are at work and have gained attention and influence whose aim is exactly the opposite of what you have said in your speech. The number of Members of this assembly who want to bring an end to European integration, the number of Members who want to reverse it and the number of Members who want renationalisation has risen dramatically.

In the previous parliamentary term, we experienced the process of attempting to have the Charter of Fundamental Rights signed by the three presidents of the institutions. I would not have believed images and scenes of this kind to be possible in a multinational, democratic parliament, but we all bore witness to what happened. The number of Members who hold opinions of this kind has increased.

This is why I would say that you are right. The struggle to continue with and to deepen the integration process, the struggle for the Treaty of Lisbon, which is a fundamental requirement for the extension of the EU, and also the struggle to extend the EU on the basis of deeper integration, represent the right approach. I am pleased that the President of this House – especially a President from a country which joined the EU in the most recent phase of enlargement, a President who, as Prime Minister of his country, began the accession negotiations – says as the central message of his period of office: we want more Europe. We want an integrated Europe, we want a deeper Europe and we want an enlarged Europe as part of the deepening process, in order to achieve one thing, and this was the central sentence in your speech: the solidarity which has led to freedom.

This is the solidarity which we now need internally, so that this freedom can be achieved together with social justice. For this reason, the socialists and social democrats fully agree with your speech, Mr Buzek. It forms the ideological and spiritual foundation of a struggle which we must take part in during this parliamentary term.

When I was a newly elected Member, I had the privilege of hearing the speech made here by the French President François Mitterand in his role as President-in-Office of the Council. I have never forgotten one sentence in that speech: 'In the end, nationalism always means war.' This means that in the end, the opposite of nationalism, overcoming nationalism, the European ideal, means peace. That is what we will be fighting to achieve together with you, Mr Buzek.

(Applause)

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) Mr President, first of all, I should like to thank you on behalf of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe for your inaugural speech. Our group can fully identify with the programme you announced. As I told you at the time, Mr President, I welcome your election as President of Parliament, not only because you symbolise the enlargement of the European Union but also – and I should like to emphasise this – on account of your involvement with Solidarność. After all, Solidarność can look back on three great achievements. It gave people in Poland a vote, it introduced democracy to the entire former Eastern Bloc, and it even changed the face of Europe fundamentally, unifying a divided Europe. As was clear from your speech, Mr President, this gives you the perfect experience to realise three ambitions in the European Parliament, too, over the next few years. These ambitions are to give the European people more say, to make the European Union more democratic and also, in this way, to advance European integration.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it would be good to underline further to President Buzek's inaugural speech that, according to the Eurobarometer, the European Parliament is the European Union institution in which citizens have the most confidence. This represents a difficult task for us all, as it means that we cannot betray this confidence and that we must give the people's voice more influence in European decision making. At the same time – based on your speech, Mr President – I think that we face a dual challenge. Firstly, we must apply the Treaty of Lisbon and implement it as soon as possible. In this regard – as you have proposed – we must enter into negotiations with the Council Presidency as soon as possible in order to agree a number of amendments.

Secondly, Mr President – and this is the other aspect of the challenge – I think that Parliament must avail itself of all the possible levers at its command to further expand its power. We have done this in the procedure for the appointment of the Commission President, but we must continue to do it on every possible point in other dossiers, too. In my view, the most important point in this connection is the need to agree a new budget for Europe and the European Union in the next few years. I consider this a splendid opportunity for the

European Parliament to urge – to require – that, in future, this budget be based on the European Union's own resources, as this Parliament will not be a real parliament until it also has complete control over its own resources, which it will be able to collect itself in future.

(Applause)

Herein lies an important task for you, Mr President: to join the whole of Parliament in this fight. In this, you will be able to count on the full support of our group, as we all know, particularly in these times of economic and financial crisis, that it is not nationalism or protectionism that will relieve our difficulties or secure our future; only continuing European integration represents a solution for the peoples of Europe, for the citizens of Europe.

In any case, I wish you every success, Mr President.

(Applause)

Rebecca Harms, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I do not need to go over much of what the previous speaker has said. It was clear to my group that we would support your candidacy, because we felt that it was high time that a major figure from the European Parliament, who also comes from one of the new Member States, took on the role of the head of this House.

In future, we would like to see the President of this House being elected on the basis of considerations such as your special skills and abilities, which have often been acknowledged. We would also like to see the power of national delegations within the large groups perhaps being applied to a slightly lesser extent than the approach which figures like you adopt.

We have great expectations of you when it comes to overcoming the major breaches which remain between East and West and which I described some weeks ago. Following the summer holidays and my observations of political developments, I would simply like to say that you are likely to have a very difficult task. My impression is that the major global financial crisis and the subsequent economic crisis have not made the job of bringing East and West closer together within the EU any easier. On the contrary, the challenges have become greater because the imbalances represent a major problem.

I would also like to take a slightly more critical approach and remind Parliament that today is the anniversary of the collapse of Lehman Brothers. We are sending a large delegation to the G20 summit where the subject of how the financial crisis can be overcome will be discussed. However, this Parliament has not managed to discuss any resolutions in this area and has not given our negotiators a uniform basis on which to work. I believe that this is an expression of weakness rather than strength.

I suspect that what lies behind this is that we still cannot agree on the analysis of how we actually got into this mess. I believe that this major crisis is not solely the responsibility of a few crazy bankers, but that in fact, it is due to the neo-liberal belief in the benefits of unregulated financial markets, which not only was and is prevalent in the US, but also remains widespread in Europe today. In the policies of the European Union we are far from reaching a consensus on the evaluation of this analysis and, therefore, we are also unable to agree on the ways out of the crisis.

I also believe, Mr President, that everything which you said about the second major challenge facing us in the context of an international round of negotiations, that is, the challenge of the climate crisis, was correct. I hope that we Europeans can take a stronger position in Copenhagen than is currently the case. I have the impression that the Europeans are still a long way from playing an appropriate leading role in the area of climate policy.

There are many reasons for this, but one reason keeps coming to my mind. We continue to put far too little trust in concepts such as the Green New Deal put forward by Ban Ki-moon or Achim Steiner on behalf of the UN. We are also unable to agree that we should begin transforming our old industrial society, that we should think more than one day ahead and that climate-friendly technologies, efficiency technologies and many other measures represent the future, not only of Europe but also of the world.

I can only say, Mr President, that we face major challenges. If you intend to put forward modern, sustainable ideas, our group will definitely be behind you. It is regrettable that we will not see a real change in the staffing of the European Commission because it is becoming apparent that the main player behind yesterday's concepts, Mr Barroso, will continue to head the Commission during the next parliamentary term.

Mr President, we wish you luck! On behalf of my group, I look forward to some exciting and, hopefully, productive debates.

(Applause)

Michał Kamiński, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, it was a real pleasure today to listen to your speech and your programme for the next two and a half years of our work. Thank you very much for your speech. It testifies to your respect for us, Members of the European Parliament, a respect which does not depend on which political group or country we come from, or on what views we represent. It was a stimulating speech, because I think that our Parliament is truly in need of the kind of leadership which you have presented in your vision today. We do not agree about everything, and it is not a secret that there are differences of opinion between us, but I would like to begin with this, responding in some sense to the voices which I have also heard in this House today.

It is not a bad thing that Parliament is a place of debate, and that Parliament is a meeting place for people who may have different views on different subjects, including different views on the future of Europe. The problem is that we should endeavour, in good faith, to confront our views with those of others – then there will always be room for compromise. If we assume – and I do assume – that everyone in this House has good intentions and wants the best for our continent, then we will be able to overcome differences, and we will always be open to discussion. What is needed is that good will.

Of course, however, Mr President, our group, the European Conservatives and Reformists, a group which is proud that it brings to Parliament a certain new dimension to political thinking about Europe, is going to want to be a strong voice for those citizens who elected us. For while we do not negate the democratic mandate of any Member who sits in this House, indeed, we deeply respect that mandate, it is our voters whom we represent. Our voters, when they chose parties which are part of the ECR Group, knew what they were voting for.

Mr President, your election was an historic moment. I will permit myself to remind our fellow Members and say that today in this House, there is a group of young Poles, invited by Members of different political groups. These Poles were born on 4 June, on the day of the first partially free elections held in our country. A meeting with people born on 4 June may not allow us to feel young any more, when we see that they are now adult people. However, I want to say that when I talked with them today, and I realised that they got on the bus in Rzeszów, a city in the south-east of Poland, and without having to stop at any borders, they came here to Strasbourg, to their Parliament, I thought that none of us who remember 4 June could imagine such felicitous events – today, young Poles, young Czechs, Estonians and Lithuanians come here to their Parliament.

Mr President, I am certain that you will guard this Parliament as a democratic institution, as a place of genuine debate of people who sincerely want to help the citizens of the European Union. And today, when we recall that you too, Mr President, come from my country, a country which has suffered so much at the hands of totalitarianism, we know one thing – and this truly is the best thing about the EU – the European Union has ensured the nations of Europe 60 years without war. This is a great achievement of this organisation, an organisation which we, the ECR Group, do want to reform, as our name indicates, but it is an organisation which we believe in. We believe in a better Europe, and it is such a Europe, a better Europe, which is closer to its citizens, that we will serve during this parliamentary term.

(Applause)

Eva-Britt Svensson, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (SV) Mr President, I would once again like to congratulate you on your election.

Transparency, democracy and pluralism are honourable words for the EU and for Parliament, but they must never be turned into mere symbolic policies. Unfortunately, these terms sometimes become nothing more than fine words. In reality, agreements are made behind closed doors. We therefore need a different method of working in Parliament, one where our work and our decisions are brought into the open in a genuine spirit of true democracy. We need an open way of working that applies to all political groups and all Members of the House. If some MEPs do not even feel involved in and aware of the work, how can we expect our citizens to feel involved and have confidence in our work and to vote in elections? Let us have new technology by all means – we need it to provide information – but we must not forget the most important ingredients for involvement. These are democracy and transparency.

We are experiencing a financial crisis and an environmental and climate crisis. I should also mention that we have trade agreements which sometimes exacerbate the problems with regard to food supply and poverty in the world.

The view of the left is that the solution to the crises is not to continue with the same policy that has sometimes been a contributory factor in creating them. The people of Europe need a different policy. They deserve a different policy – a policy that puts the needs of the people first and not, as is currently the case, the needs of the market. One way to start to move the policy in the right direction is to stop the privatisation and deregulation of public services. The market has not, in fact, succeeded when it comes to satisfying people's need for work and social rights, for example. We have to suffer the consequences of this.

We talk about democracy. Democracy also requires that our civil rights and freedoms never be violated. We currently have many proposals for the additional monitoring of our citizens. Freedom of expression must also apply on the Internet.

Thus, the EU and its citizens need a different policy for a fairer society with greater solidarity. We in the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left are prepared, and gladly accept our responsibility, to play our part in building a fairer EU with greater solidarity and a fairer and better world.

Francesco Enrico Speroni, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Mr President, I again extend my congratulations to you on your appointment. I welcomed your address, your programme, and wish to concentrate on an aspect which, in my opinion, is the most important or should be the most important for us MEPs, namely our legislative work.

Dialogue with the major powers is important, missions are important, but the main task of a parliament – at least in my opinion – is to make laws, to establish rules, because, above all, we were elected to carry out this task, this mandate. One of the problems is that we do not have the right of legislative initiative, since the founding fathers and their successors denied it to us. We are continually voting for resolutions and signing written statements which are not followed up as the Commission does not take them into account.

Mr Barroso said that this is only right as otherwise, if the Commission were to accept legislative proposals from Parliament through written declarations and resolutions, it would violate the treaties, which do not permit this. Allow me to say that I find this interpretation specious: the treaties do not provide for it explicitly, but neither do they prohibit it.

I must point out that when Parliament asks for something, when Parliament asks for a legislative initiative, it does so on behalf of millions of European citizens, the majority of the millions of European citizens, since both written declarations and resolutions need majority support in order to be adopted.

I am therefore sure that you, Mr President, will work hard to make the Commission accept that the proposals we MEPs put forward can become EU legislation, in accordance with the will of the people, our electors. It is an onerous task, but I am certain that you will make every effort to accomplish it.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, as a non-attached Member I speak, of course, on my own behalf, but also on behalf of some of my colleagues, not my Dutch colleagues from the PVV, but my colleagues from the *Front National*, from the Bulgarian *Ataka* party, from the Austrian *FPÖ* party, from the British National Party, from the Hungarian *Jobbik* party and from the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* party.

I should like to say, Mr President, that I do not for one second doubt the sincerity of the proposals you have made. However, you will permit me to say that I have doubts about their realism.

You began by raising the problem of the economic crisis. It is a fact that millions of Europeans are seeing their assets and jobs threatened by the perverse effects of globalisation, which abandons them, for the benefit of the few, to the unfair competition of countries whose workers are cynically exploited, and to the rapacity of stateless financial interests. The Union, sadly, has not protected Europeans from this situation. On the contrary, it has plunged them into it.

Secondly, from my modest position, but expressing the political forces that Mr Schulz was quite willing to admit are a threat to the traditional organisations – and I thank him for it – I should like to call on our Parliament, and yourself, Mr President, to be more modest and to set certain voluntary limits to our powers. I am thoroughly convinced, as a European and as a Christian, that a number of the values that we convey are universal values. I am even happier to insist that it is not our job to give the world principles and laws, all the more so because organisations, such as the United Nations, exist for that very purpose, and all the

more so because there is a great deal to do in Europe itself, where, against the right to life, we are providing for the elimination of our own children, and where, against freedom of expression, we are pushing through a moral, media, political and judicial dictatorship of what is known as 'political correctness'. Political groups such as ours that express the suffering and the hopes of millions of Europeans are discriminated against, pursued and sometimes even dissolved, as the *Vlaams Blok* party was in Belgium in an absolute scandal that provoked not a single protest in this House. Had that have happened in Africa or in Latin America, we undoubtedly would have heard a different version of events.

We non-attached Members do not have the same rights as the others – that much is clear – and, as we told you yesterday, we still do not have any representatives at the Conference of Presidents.

Finally, due to the voting methods, millions of Europeans are denied the possibility of being represented in their own countries' legislative bodies, which are supposed to represent the electorate in all its diversity.

To conclude, I should like to express the wish that we remember, at all times in our work, that Europe is, in the history of mankind, the region that invented the freedom of nations, which cannot be found elsewhere; the equal dignity of those nations; and respect for their jurisdiction and for the principle of non-interference, which means that everyone is in charge of their own affairs and on their own territory. That is one of the great contributions of European civilisation to man's heritage.

Cecilia Malmström, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, this is my first opportunity in my capacity as a member of the Council Presidency to stand before this Chamber and, on behalf of the Swedish Presidency and the whole of the Council and also myself personally, I would like to congratulate you most sincerely Mr President. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is wonderful to see you in this position. It is a personal victory for you, I know. It is a victory for the European Parliament and it is also a victory for all of us who fervently support European cooperation and everything it stands for.

I would also like to thank you for the visionary speech and the ambitious plans you have for this Parliament. I am convinced that the European Parliament rests safe in your hands. During your leadership, you will hopefully bring about concrete decisions, but indeed also the miracle you referred to. We in the Council look forward to working with you and the European Parliament. Many Members have spoken of the numerous challenges we are facing: the climate question, the economic crisis, jobs, Europe's role in the world and so on.

You have an important legislative role here, in representing citizens, but also in the debate that is held here. It is extremely important for the European Parliament to always stand up for European values. If the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force – and that is something that I certainly hope will happen – the European Parliament's role will be extended and you will have a greater influence on the European agenda. I know that you will take the defence of the European Parliament and the institution's role seriously, but you will also hopefully be a bridge to other institutions as well as a serious partner for dialogue. The Presidency is very much looking forward to being your partner for dialogue over the next six years and we wish you the best of luck in your work.

President. – I would like to say to all new Members of the European Parliament that the Minister is a former Member of this House, and so is one of us.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, on behalf of the Commission and on my own behalf, I want sincerely to congratulate you once again and wish you all the best in your term of office. Your election symbolises not only the reunification of Europe, but also a Europe that is very much attached to the central values of freedom and solidarity.

Personally and institutionally I want to commit to close cooperation with you and with the European Parliament. Parliament and the Commission are the two Community institutions *par excellence* at the heart of Community matters. You and all the Members of this Parliament have been directly elected by our citizens and the Commission has the right and the duty to put European interests above any particular interest. I believe that we have a special responsibility for the European project in full respect of the Treaties.

That is why I want to reiterate my willingness to work together to advance European parliamentary democracy.

(Applause)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA*Vice-President*

Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE). – (IT) Mr Buzek, I very much enjoyed your speech and especially the part about the institutional, but also social role played by Parliament, which you described as the very essence of the European democratic system.

Today we are celebrating the Union of 27 which has come together once more, meeting here following the divisions caused by the ideologies of terror which built walls on our continent, walls which did not endure and which were blown down by the winds of democracy and freedom.

This year we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the first elections to Parliament by direct universal suffrage, together with the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. I am pleased to recall, Mr Buzek, that when, for the first time, 30 years ago, my parents voted to elect the first MEPs from Italy, there was no right to vote in your country.

In 1979, just one year after Karol Wojtyła was elected Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, while in Italy and in other countries the first European Parliament elections were being held, you were active in the then semi-clandestine trade union *Solidarność*, which fought to bring democracy and freedom to your country. To assert those same rights – democracy and freedom – we went to the polls, while every day you were risking your life and repression.

For that reason, President Buzek, I am honoured to have contributed with my small and possibly non-decisive vote to your election, and I am pleased that today in Parliament, various histories are coming together and being ennobled, inspired by the same values and ideals: histories which make the great history of this young Europe strong.

Marek Siwiec (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, I congratulate you on your election, and on a good speech. I would have liked you to devote a little more attention in your speech to the countries of Eastern Europe. In the near future, a very difficult election will be held in Ukraine. The European Parliament has a particular responsibility to show concern for democratic procedures in that country. It was in the European Parliament, in the foremost institution of the European Union, that support began for the great changes which took place five years ago.

I would ask that this matter, connected with the presidential election in Ukraine, be treated in a special and unconventional way, with the involvement of those institutions and delegations which have been designated for this, so that the European Parliament will be known as a serious institution which is concerned about democratic procedures in Ukraine.

Eva Lichtenberger (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to congratulate you and I would like to say one thing to you in particular. A Parliament is measured by the way in which it uses and puts into practice its rights and by the fact that it does not withdraw from major political debate.

We are all responsible for working together with you to ensure that this Parliament is not subjected to pressure from Commission proposals which are half-baked or which represent the unilateral interests of specific lobbyists. We are responsible for speaking up clearly at this point and we must do so. We must think about how the Treaty of Lisbon will change our situation. I hope that we will be able to do all of this.

We must demonstrate clearly – and, in my opinion, this also concerns the question of the election of the Commission President – that we are making use of our rights and we must send a clear signal to the Commission. This means that there must now be no direct election of Mr Barroso.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) President Buzek, allow me to address you directly, even though you are sitting in your member's seat. Your election in this Parliament has been viewed as a sign that there is no longer an Eastern bloc, but a united Europe. You mentioned this in your address when you talked about there being no more old and new Europe, just our Europe.

Unfortunately, many people do not feel this way. You also referred in your address to the great fear that pervaded the countries which joined only in 2004. Today, however, you are aware of the sense of disappointment felt in these countries. The reason for this is that there is no equality of rights. Equal rights are the key issue. Mr Lindblad, the state secretary, mentioned that equality of rights was the budget's fundamental principle. If this really is the case, why is there no equality of rights with regard to agricultural

subsidies? Hungary proved that it is able to receive them with its institutional system, yet it is still discriminated against.

Mr President, you have encouraged everyone to use their mother tongue. I am pleased that in this Parliament, as a Hungarian, I can enjoy equal rights, but in Slovakia I would be punished for using my mother tongue. Mr President, you have suggested acting as a mediator. We sincerely thank you for this offer. However, a real result will only be achieved by this action if the Hungarian minority can freely use their mother tongue in the land of their birth. I wish you every success with this too.

Zuzana Roithová (PPE). – (CS) Mr President, I am truly delighted that you, a citizen of high moral standing and a Silesian to boot, are taking the baton from the hand of Hans-Gert Pöttering and that, like him, you are emphasising the potential of a united European Union in terms of values such as human rights and solidarity between nations. This election period in the shadow of the economic crisis will put that solidarity to the test. I do not fear for it as far as the voting here is concerned, but I know that individual citizens and regional politicians are ever more frequently scrutinising our voting under the slogan of ‘charity begins at home’. I would therefore like to call on you, Mr President, when reporting on our work here in the European parliament, to devote greater attention than has previously been the case to improvements in the position of Europeans in global terms.

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Mr President, I have always admired Mr Barroso as our Commission President, who is an Atlanticist free-marketeer, which my party strongly supports and holds dear. I am also a strong friend of Portugal, so I am very happy to support José Manuel.

However, I am concerned at what I read yesterday in the *Daily Telegraph* that he has agreed with the ALDE Group to create a powerful new and intrusive Human Rights Commissioner in his Commission, straddling external and internal human rights issues. This seems to fly in the face of the Centre Right-led decision of this Parliament to reject a new combined Human Rights Committee and duplicates the work of the Council of Europe and its own Human Rights Commissioner. Please can President Barroso clarify his policies and intentions here?

President. – I think that this question should have been asked at a different time today, namely when we discuss Mr Barroso’s statement, and not at this time.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) President Buzek, you spoke about the Slovak-Hungarian dispute. It is not a Slovak-Hungarian dispute. It is, in fact, a Slovak-European Union dispute as it involves a country flouting fundamental European values. Your task is to help reach agreement not between Slovakia and Hungary, but between the European Union Parliament and Slovakia, as this country has infringed the documents and agreements which it has signed and ratified.

Secondly, there is the issue of Silesia. I am pleased that you mentioned it. There are so many territories like this in the European Union which belonged to several different countries during the last century. We Hungarians were split among 10 countries after the First World War, of which seven are now EU Member States. We are very grateful that we can now be together without resorting to weapons and changing borders. During the last century, five official languages were learnt in the Lower Carpathians region. Why am I mentioning this? It is because in my own country too, where I live in the Székely Land, in Transylvania, the current Romanian Government is still ashamed of our mother tongue and symbols.

However, the problem with Europe’s human rights values is not limited just to the Eastern bloc; it affects the West too. This is why we are urging that Europe have not only a commissioner for minorities, but also a minority framework law which is binding on every European country.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, thank you for your speech. I believe, however, that our paths diverge considerably. I stand here before you as one who believes in a Europe of cooperating nations, not a Europe tied to the federalist approach of the Lisbon Treaty.

On 2 October, the Irish electorate will be asked – for a second time – to vote for the Lisbon Treaty, a treaty cobbled together to circumvent the people’s rejection of a European Constitution. I commend the electorate of the Irish Republic for exercising good sense in the first referendum, sense that I believe that they will show once again in the second one. I urge them to remain firm in their resolve to reject the Treaty. The post-dated promises and threats have done nothing to change the fundamentals of the Treaty. It remains the wrong path for Europe and Europe’s nations.

However, I believe that that choice should also be given to my people, the British people. They were promised a referendum by the Labour Government, and the Labour Government should fulfil that promise. If not, their possible successors in the Conservatives should do the same.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Mr President, as a Hungarian and a friend of Poland, as well as an East European and a citizen of a new Member State, I derive great pleasure and satisfaction from your work as president because it can contribute to the full emancipation of the 12 new Member States. Until now, we have only been equal, but we would like to be more equal.

You have made an historic pledge, Mr President, because you are prepared to tackle such a delicate issue as Silesia, which has not been tackled before. In other words, you are assuming a mediating role in dealing with national minority matters. Minorities account for 15% of Europe's population, 6.5% of which are migrant or immigrant minorities, primarily in Western Europe, and 8.5% historical minorities.

The fact that you are willing to mediate in the Hungarian-Slovak conflict and between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian ethnic community in Slovakia is an historic act. I hope that the Commission will also follow this example. We cannot sweep minority issues in Europe under the carpet. Thank you for your attention and I wish you every success.

Antonello Antinoro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wanted to express, Mr Buzek, how proud I am to be part of an institution as important as the European Parliament, which you chair. The sacrifices which you made in your country 20 years ago and which today allow those 12 countries which were mentioned earlier to be represented in this Chamber make Europe stronger.

I would, however, like to express my concern over the programme you set out during your address which should, and I hope it will, strengthen Parliament. I hope that what you announced will come to fruition.

I hope that the next President of the European Commission, who I am sure will be Mr Barroso, will listen to you on account of the forceful words that you used, to ensure that Parliament meets the needs of over 550 million European citizens who voted for us, who chose us, and who want and demand that Parliament and each and every one of us provide the answers which, perhaps, Europe has certainly tried to give, but without fully succeeding.

With regard to this aspect of your work I am hopeful, and I am convinced that through you we will manage to attain that certainty that you yourself referred to.

Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL). – (CS) It was John Stuart Mill who said that parliament should be a mirror of national life. This is no mean feat and, in my opinion, it is important for our forthcoming term in office, especially as Europe is too important an issue to be entrusted solely to the decision making of the so-called political elites.

Michael Theurer (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to congratulate you warmly on your speech. The process of bringing an end to the division of Europe was the result, on the one hand, of the desire for freedom among Central and Eastern European countries and, on the other, of course, of the attractiveness of Europe as an economic model.

I believe that we have too little confidence, too little confidence in the future. If we cannot achieve this in Europe, then who can? We should explain with greater conviction that we can work on resolving our problems with confidence. We have a great deal of potential and there are still opportunities for growth throughout the world. While there are still people in the world who need goods and services, there will still be opportunities for growth. We can make sure that in Europe, we have a slice of this cake and everyone involved will benefit.

I would like to encourage all of us to have more confidence in Europe as a successful model and I would like to ask you to convey this idea in your speeches.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) Hungary commemorated the 1956 revolution and fight for freedom on 23 October 2006. On that day, a huge number of police, orchestrated by the government, attacked peaceful demonstrators, pedestrians and even numerous groups of foreign tourists in restaurants as they were quietly having a meal.

Absolute terror reigned in the country. Many hundreds of people suffered serious injury, including 14 people who were shot in the eyes, many of whom also lost their sight. Many hundreds of people were put in prison

and had sham criminal proceedings brought against them. This ended only recently with them all being released, virtually without exception.

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the outstanding job done by the police. Today, Mr President, we have in this European Parliament Kinga Göncz, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, who was a member of that government which sanctioned the shooting. I would like to hear your view on this, Mr President. I would also like to ask you, on Hungary's behalf, to be true to the spirit of solidarity, to fight for human rights in the European Union, and to fight to put an end to the human rights crisis which has been going on in Hungary since autumn 2006. I would also call on the person in this Parliament who reminds people of this situation and brings shame to the House to resign from her post as Vice-Chairman of the LIBE Committee.

László Tőkés (PPE). – (HU) As a Hungarian living in Romania, I would like to congratulate President Jerzy Buzek, in the spirit of solidarity, a worthy successor to our former president, Hans-Gert Pöttering. In the spirit of solidarity, let us remember that Polish refugees were welcomed by Hungary 70 years ago.

In the spirit of solidarity, I wish to express our pleasure that one of the key figures in Solidarność has been appointed to lead Parliament. Let us also remember Pope John Paul II and the faith aspect. Solidarność and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution signified freedom, while the events in Temesvár (Timișoara), along with the personality and spirituality of Pope John Paul, represent the power of faith. We also expect that through their accession, the Polish people and Eastern Europe will make the same contribution and bring greater faith. This is why I am looking forward to President Buzek's presidency with confidence.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, I would also like to congratulate you very sincerely, not only on your election, but also on your speech today, because you have shown that we have one Europe, and that there are no old and new countries. Europe also remains diverse, and what you have pledged, that the European Parliament will reflect this diversity in its work, is of immense value.

This does not mean, however, that Europe is equal. Indeed, there are many differences, which we in the European Parliament should tackle. Citizens of the European Union very often receive entirely different remuneration for doing the same work. Citizens of the European Union today, in numbers which are always too high, are without work, and this is another matter which we should tackle. There is too much diversity and inequality in terms of access to the benefits associated with education, culture and health care. This is a tremendous challenge, which the European Parliament, under your leadership, should also set itself.

I would like to find out what you think should be done, in the context of what was said about a common energy policy, with an undertaking which is today more German and Russian than European? I am thinking of the gas pipeline, because you spoke about energy policy. There is also the question of enlargement of the European Union – what about Ukraine? What time scale are we setting for the accession of Ukraine to the European Union?

Jerzy Buzek, President. – (PL) I would like, first of all, to thank all those who spoke in the discussion for their extraordinary support. I understand that we may, in some specific cases, have different views. This is very good, because it always yields something new. Only an exchange of views, only a difference of views and discussion can give us answers to the most difficult questions. Yet the tremendous support which was expressed in the House during the speeches puts me under an additional obligation, because I understand that we stand before great challenges, and we must overcome them all. You have given me a mandate, an exceptional and strong mandate, and at an exceptional time. I should like to stress very strongly that I realise this and that I am aware of my responsibilities over the next two and a half years of work, not only that of the European Parliament, but of the entire European Union, and also for the impression our citizens have of our work, which is incredibly important.

I would like to thank very warmly Mr Joseph Daul, Chairman of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats). I very much appreciate the emphasis that it is our Europe. I consider myself to be one of those who have come here from Central and Eastern Europe, but today our common Europe requires corporate action. I do not forget where I have come from, but time is moving on so quickly. Integration requires that we feel a mutual responsibility, and that this responsibility also be borne by the new Member States – what we call the 'new' ones, although, as I said, there are no 'new' and 'old' ones.

Mr Schulz stressed that it is a two-and-a-half-year programme. That may be so. What I really had in mind is that we need continuity. In fact, I was speaking about what Europe should be like in five or ten years, and

what direction we should be taking. In two and a half years the new President will add new priorities, or he will modify the present ones slightly, but let us always have before us a longer perspective, perhaps even ten or fifteen years, so that we can anticipate events which might sometimes surprise us. Of course, I do agree that the best enlargement is the kind that results from our internal integration.

Mr Verhofstadt stressed the significance of the citizen's voice. I feel the same. The voice of the citizens has enormous significance here. Parliament represents the citizens, hence our great responsibility. He also stressed that in response to the crisis, we should come together, including in economic affairs, and make decisions together, which is just the opposite of protectionism, and I, too, stressed this in my speech.

Mrs Harms spoke of relations with national parliaments. We make over 50% of European law, which is then approved by national parliaments, so it is very important that we have good relations with the parliaments in our countries. Why? – because we need greater contact with the citizens. There is no doubt that those parliaments, our own, national parliaments, have significantly better contact with the citizens. They are shown on television every day, which is not always true of our Parliament. Let the citizens learn about the importance of what we create here in the European Parliament, and in the European Commission and the European Council. Let them know that Parliament is responsible for over half of the decisions concerning our countries. Thanks to the fact that we will, from now on, be very close to the national parliaments, it will be easier for us to convey this.

The crisis does, of course, reveal an enormous lack of trust. This is really what it was about. Mrs Harms and I have the same opinion on the issue of our climate. We were both in Bali, we were both in Poznań, and we will both be in Copenhagen. We will work out an agreement.

Mr Kamiński stressed that we have different views on the future of Europe. I agree with this, and we should indeed listen to each other. If you represent what are today fairly large groups of citizens who have a somewhat different view of the future of Europe, this warns us about something, it informs us about something, and we, or I, who believe in a European future and European integration, know significantly more about Europeans because you raise various kinds of objections. As far as this question is concerned, you may be sure that the debate will be thorough.

Mrs Svensson spoke about the transparency of Parliament, that we must know what decisions we make, and that our electors must also know. I concur entirely. I have no doubt that the problem of social justice is important. I myself have roots in a trade union, which I was in for very many years, and it was an ordinary trade union. However, we know perfectly well that in order to have the right means to help the poorest, we must have a healthy economy, and that we always have to try to find a balance between the one and the other.

Mr Speroni spoke about appropriate and worthy cooperation with the European Commission and the European Council. Please remember that Parliament is growing in significance. The Treaty of Lisbon guarantees us considerably more powers than we have at present. This is a good thing, because we are, in fact, representatives who have been elected directly by the citizens of the EU.

Mr Gollnisch does not doubt the sincerity of my intentions, but does he wonder whether they are realistic. I would like to say that 30 or 40 years ago, it was completely unrealistic to think that I should ever stand before such a comprehensive body and be answering your questions. It was so devoid of realism that I did not even dare dream of it. So we see that if we proceed on a particular course with profound faith and conviction, then those impossible things become possible. Let us endeavour to make the impossible become possible.

(Applause)

Mrs Malmström – yes, we are working with the Swedish Presidency. I have already been to Sweden. We talked about climate change, about the climate in Europe in general, about the crisis and about unemployment. There is also a very important programme – the Stockholm Programme. Let us remember this. Parliament has a lot to accomplish in the Stockholm Programme, including in the area of organised crime, and not only within the European Union.

There is no doubt that we are going to work together with Mr Barroso. I like his offer very much. Mr Silvestris spoke of the brief history of the liberation of Europe, and I fully share his opinion.

Mr Siwiec mentioned Ukraine. Actually, as far as I am concerned, this is an obvious matter, because I was part of the European Union delegation to Ukraine. I went to Ukraine three times, as you remember, and I

did not want to go into this. Please remember that, for Europeans, every aspect of European cooperation is important: in the Mediterranean region, with Latin America and with the United States, but most important of all are our neighbours. Our neighbours are found around the Mediterranean Sea and in Eastern Europe. These are the main areas, Eastern and Southern Europe, but let us not argue about which is more important. Elections are approaching in Ukraine, and so for the next six months, Ukraine will certainly be the most important. However, let us not contend with one another in this way. It is very important that we maintain a balance. I fully endorse your opinion on this matter.

Mrs Lichtenberger spoke of the role of Parliament when we make law. I agree, I agree that we must make law transparently, we must have our own opinion, but that is already *de facto* declared by Lisbon. If the Treaty of Lisbon comes into force, this will happen automatically.

Mr Balczó asks if a unified Europe really does exist to the extent that I said in my speech. Yes, indeed, it does exist, and it is united, but it is still in the process of solving, in partnership, the problems of agriculture. I said firmly that the EU has funds for promoting cohesion. Since we have united, let us not break up in another way, as a result of a lack of reciprocity in the opportunities for citizens to develop. We will endeavour to achieve this. Some countries of the European Union have been members for 20 or 30 years and are still part of these programmes, and we all have the same rights. It is really a united Europe in which we have different standards of living. We will even out these differences, this is our hope and it is an opportunity for us, but let us now speak of a Community and also of our responsibility. I wanted to stress this very strongly.

Mrs Roithová spoke about joint responsibility for the crisis, and I fully concur. Besides, we live so close to one another that there is almost no barrier to our understanding of each other already. This is extremely important for us. Mr Tannock mentioned a Human Rights Commissioner. This is, of course, a question to be decided by the Commission President and the Commission. However, I am sure that we and Mr Tannock will meet in Ukraine in a couple of months when the presidential election is held.

Mr Sógor spoke of bilateral European discussions, so I would like to say that, indeed, it is best to resolve the problems of minorities bilaterally. However, it is also better to open borders than to move them. In Europe, we have learned not to argue about borders, and in our part of Europe we do not have this problem. We have simply opened borders, and that is our goal – it is our greatest achievement.

Mrs Dodds said that the European Union should be a Europe of cooperating nations, and not a federal union. You spoke very wisely. We are, indeed, talking about cooperation between nations. We are talking about the need to retain identity, but also of the need for mutual openness and cooperation. I like your ideas very much, and the European Union in its present form, as well as in its form under the Treaty of Lisbon, are doing exactly as you suggest.

Mr Tabajdi spoke of the regions, and also of my region, Silesia, and said that it is in a certain sense a kind of mediator. I agree. If they are transborder regions, they give the opportunity for better mutual understanding. Mr Antinoro then spoke about the achievements of my country. Thank you for your remarks. Will I bring strength to the European Parliament? I certainly have the energy to do this, but what is definitely needed is the energy of over 700 fellow Members. I am counting on this completely, and I understand that all of us are 'energetic'.

Mr Ransdorf does really represent the citizens and the life of the nation. I agree, and this is why the responsibility and the powers of the European Parliament are growing. Let us also allow the national parliaments to have a strong influence on what is happening in Europe. Mr Theurer spoke of the pursuit of freedom on the one hand, and of attractiveness on the other. Yes, over here it was attractive, but over there we were striving for freedom. It is true. Please note that we have assuaged the situation in the Balkans, and today the Balkans are at peace. May God be praised. The countries of that region are queuing up to join the European Union, and this is the great attractiveness of the EU.

Mrs Morvai recalled some dramatic events. If you would like to give me some information about this, please give it to me in writing. I can also meet with you to discuss this so that I have an understanding of this matter. Mr Tóké spoke about 1956 and Hungary. We all care very much about those events, and about our profound faith in the EU. Yes, I, too, believe deeply in the strength of the European Union.

Mr Olejniczak, however, asked a series of questions about inequality in Europe. We must definitely speak about unity, but on the other hand, all the funds of which I spoke earlier are still operating, as are all the measures which are intended to give us the opportunity to eliminate inequality. They remain in force; nothing has changed here. The situation itself remains as open and as clear as it ever was, and so it is a very good

thing that we do have a united Europe. As for an answer concerning the supply of oil, gas, and energy resources in general, we must speak about a common energy policy. Unnecessary tensions will not then arise between us. These build unnecessary walls between us which, after all, we have been dismantling for decades, and that is what the future is about. This is why I propose most definitely a common energy policy.

Of course, in order to accede to the European Union, there are criteria which need to be fulfilled. It was also said that, in order for others to join the EU, we in the EU must be well integrated, because then the reception of new Member States will be effective. We need time for integration, but a country like Croatia is, to a great extent, ready for integration. I understand that Croatia has a strong possibility of accession to the EU fairly quickly, although it has encountered certain problems. It may be the same with Iceland, but it is very difficult to determine time frames for other countries which are not so well prepared. Please remember that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which are now in the EU started preparing for integration in 1991/1992, so it took 12 years. We prepared for integration for 12 years, and in fact we had better conditions than these countries currently have, because then the world situation was better – there was no crisis, and many other factors combined to give us a better situation. It takes a long time and I would not venture to give time frames, but let us remember that enlargement is a good European Union policy, although it is a long-term one.

I would like once again to thank you all for the discussion. I have noted all the comments with great care, and they will now become a basis for thinking about certain modifications. Furthermore, we are going to meet regularly. I will sit here, where I am now, because I would like to be as close as possible to you all.

(Applause)

President. – Thank you, Mr Buzek, not least for the painstaking precision with which you responded to all the speeches, without exception.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), in writing. – (PL) I congratulate you on your election to the position of President of the European Parliament. Along with all our compatriots, I am proud that for the first time in history, a Pole has taken up this position of honour. This is, for us, confirmation of our role and position in Europe.

At the same time, Poland is one of the few remaining countries which have not completed the ratification procedure for the Treaty of Lisbon, a treaty which would make European integration more effective. I find this paradoxical. I will remind you that the Polish Parliament approved ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in April of this year, but the ratification documents have yet to be signed by the President.

I think that you could make a valuable contribution to public debate in Poland and help to increase the support of society for the treaty, which could speed up completion of the ratification procedure. I would also like to thank you for your personal involvement in this matter in Ireland. I hope very strongly that the Irish people will vote 'yes' on 2 October, and that the necessary formalities will then be completed by the Czech Republic and Poland.

Helping to bring an end to the 'Lisbon ratification saga' is one of the most important objectives of this Parliament, and I hope that it will also be one of its successes.

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE), in writing. – (PL) This is an important moment in the history of European integration. Thank you for the programme which you have presented. I hope that you will manage to complete this ambitious agenda. I wish you success in directing the work of the European Parliament in accordance with values which are important for all Europeans.

Just as the Polish Solidarity movement was able to change the face of Poland and other countries in Central Europe, so European solidarity will enable us to meet the challenges before which we stand today. This will be possible under certain conditions, namely that our solidarity will have to be consistent, genuine and determined to bring about changes. Just as in Poland, where totalitarianism did not fall because of words, but because of deeds, so European solidarity will be effective if it is translated into specific action. I believe that this will indeed happen.

This vision of the future of Europe is attractive to very many Europeans. I am counting on the European Parliament, under your leadership, Mr President, to play a positive and intensive role in making this vision a reality. Thank you very much.

(The sitting was suspended at 13.25 and resumed at 15.00)

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

9. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting

(The Minutes of the previous sitting were approved)

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Martin Schulz (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, I have no comments on the minutes of yesterday's session, but instead I would like to comment on an incident in this morning's session. My colleague, Kinga Göncz, a Member of Parliament in my group and former Hungarian Foreign Minister, was insulted in the debate this morning by Krisztina Morvai from the fascist Jobbik party in a completely unacceptable way. As Foreign Minister for Hungary, Mrs Göncz has worked harder than almost anyone else in the country to achieve international reconciliation between Hungary and its neighbouring countries. I would like to reject emphatically the outrageous insult made to Mrs Göncz by Mrs Morvai, a member of a neo-fascist party.

(Applause)

Kinga Göncz (S&D). – (HU) Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am very sorry that this discussion is being held here in the European Parliament. I would also like to respond briefly by saying that the party represented by Krisztina Morvai set up a paramilitary unit in 2006 and, since then, is using it to intimidate the peaceful public majority.

This includes, in particular, minorities, gays, Roma and Jews. This paramilitary unit was recently disbanded by the courts, but an MEP from this party wore the uniform of this organisation in this chamber during the July session. In Hungary, this party conducted a campaign full of anti-European, racist, homophobic, anti-Roma and xenophobic diatribes and regularly described Hungary as a colony of the European Union in its utterances. The event which Krisztina Morvai spoke about took place in 2006 when these extreme right-wing protesters set the Hungarian television broadcasting corporation's central building on fire and ran riot for days, resulting in 113 police officers being injured.

They ran riot again on 23 October. They tried, in fact, to disrupt a national ceremony using violence. This was the first time in the country's history, since the change of regime, that the police had had any experience of dealing with extreme right-wing protests. After this, the government set up an independent committee, whose reports are available on a wide range of websites, including in English. This committee made suggestions and numerous court proceedings were also initiated. Hungarian government bodies investigated these abuses.

There were indeed problems. However, I would like to say to Krisztina Morvai that if she is calling the institutional system in her own country dictatorial, the problem with this is that if democracy was not really working in Hungary, she would not have been able to make her speech in this Chamber just now. I apologise again that this subject was raised before Parliament and I sincerely hope that this discussion will not be continued here.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) Mr President, according to the Rules of Procedure, I have half a minute to ask a question. This question is addressed to Mr Schulz. Based on the slanderous statements made here by his colleague, how can he dare call a party fascist in this Chamber, simply because it does not agree with every aspect of the European Union's main thrust? This party received 430 000 votes in Hungary. You are therefore calling 430 000 voters fascist. From now on, think before you speak!

10. Signature of acts adopted under codecision: see Minutes

11. Statement by the President-designate of the Commission (debate)

President. – The next item is the statement by the President-designate of the Commission.

José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the Commission. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are living in unprecedented times. I personally am convinced that the history books of the future will refer to the pre-financial crisis era and the post-financial crisis era. Yet this crisis is not just a financial, economic and social one. It is also a crisis of values. That is why I believe that we must put our European social model, our social market economy, at the heart of our response to this crisis.

At the same time, the crisis has shown just how interdependent we have become in this globalised era. There is the financial crisis, but also the energy crisis. There are the food security problems and climate change, an area in which Europe is now the leader. That is why I feel we can say that this is the moment of truth for Europe. Do we want to shape globalisation with our values, by defending our interests, or do we want to suffer globalisation, by following the lead of others?

For me, the choice is clear. We must rise to this challenge together because, if we do not do so together, Europe is in danger of being marginalised. We have experience. I do not believe that any other region in the world has the same experience as we have of establishing an internal market, common rules, common institutions, and indeed a single currency and solidarity and cohesion policies. We have this unique experience. I therefore believe that, instead of suffering globalisation, we can shape it, because we are, by nature, a globalisation laboratory; we are the champions of global governance.

Now is not the time for the status quo, or routine. We must have an agenda for change. Now more than ever we need a strong Europe. With the Treaty of Lisbon, we will be stronger in the future and we will be better able to act.

When I say a stronger Europe, let us be clear what that means. It does not necessarily mean more centralisation of powers. I am committed to the democratic principle of subsidiarity, subsidiarity linked, of course, to solidarity, with decisions being taken at the most appropriate level.

When I speak of a stronger Europe, I am also speaking of the European spirit, of the culture of European decision-making, of the Community method and of the will to act together – not only the ability to act but also the will to act, the political will. We need a Europe that is uncompromising when it comes to defending its values and its interests, which rejects protectionism of all kinds, but without being naive, and which can demonstrate this proactive spirit. It is this proactive spirit that guided the drafting of the document that I sent to you all before this sitting.

The mandate of the Commission over which I currently preside was that of the first Commission of the enlarged Europe, of the great Europe of 27. I believe that, now we have consolidated this Europe, we have the conditions in place for a new ambition: a new social ambition, because there is a crisis and unemployment is the main problem facing Europeans; a new ambition regarding the fight against climate change, an area in which we already play a leading role; and a new ambition in terms of the way we deal with globalisation.

Last week I had the opportunity to discuss these political guidelines with all the political groups that invited me. I think it was a very useful, constructive and open discussion. I received many points of view.

I believe that the time has now come for us to reach a broad consensus and to reach some level of agreement on the way forward. Before you all today I formerly pledge that – if I am confirmed by this Parliament – I will apply those political guidelines during my second term and I will, together with incoming Commissioners, translate them into the next Commission's legislative and work programme. I am not going to repeat those guidelines now but I think, after discussions with all of you, that it will be useful to make some of the elements in the guidelines more concrete and also to take on board a number of your suggestions. In the interests of transparency, I would like to highlight those areas with all of you now.

First of all, the basic line: as we fully implement our recovery plan in order to move out of this economic and financial crisis, we must keep an eye on the future. We must reinvigorate our inclusive social market economy. We will invest in new sources of sustainable growth, in smart green growth, in the networks of the future from digital infrastructure to the European super grids for electricity and gas – all this to promote high levels of employment and social provision and to reinforce the European model of society, while succeeding in an increasingly competitive world.

Solidarity must remain key. That is why, apart from all the decisions already taken and proposed in terms of structural funds and in terms of doubling our balance of payment support for some countries in difficulties, I want to commit myself to using all the instruments at my disposal to help those Member States with serious budgetary constraints – namely the new Member States – back onto the road to recovery.

But we cannot return to the previous growth model. It has clearly proved unsustainable. We have to create the conditions where the transition to a low-carbon economy is a source of competitive advantage for our businesses, a source of jobs for our workers and a source of hope for future generations. Yes, I agree with those of you who said that coordination is not enough. Yes, we need to map out a genuine European agenda. Yes, we need an integrated vision for a coherent European strategy, a European Union 2020 strategy that builds on open markets by combining new sources of sustainable growth, employment and social cohesion, our climate and energy security agenda, a fresh approach to industrial policy and a move to a knowledge society. I stand for a particular emphasis on innovation and support measures for SMEs. Yes, this means overhauling the Lisbon Strategy after 2010. Yes, we need a much more integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental strands of the different strategies. As President of the Commission, I commit myself to doing my best to convince Member States also to accept this coherence and coordination approach.

I said in the guidelines that the economy needs a financial system that is more ethical, robust and responsible. Regulation and supervision have not kept pace with the integration and innovation of financial markets – not in Europe; not at a global level. Let me say that I have been shocked by the scale of unethical behaviour that we have seen. We cannot allow a return to ‘business as usual’. The issue of bonuses, for instance, requires urgent action. We are now in a leading position in the G20 – a process which, by the way, was started in Europe – but it is true that more needs to be done. Next week, on the eve of the G20 meeting in Pittsburgh, the Commission will adopt proposals to build a true European system of supervision – a system that reflects the integrated nature of our single market.

A review of our action in three years will provide an opportunity to see what further action is needed. It is crucial that we get regulation that ensures the responsibility and the legitimacy of the financial sector without suffocating innovation. I want Europe to keep its world leadership in financial services.

In my guidelines, I also explained why the crisis calls for a much stronger focus on the social dimension in Europe at all levels of decision making – in Europe, but also at a national level. The financial sector and the economy may be showing signs of recovery but – let us be clear – the crisis is not over for those who have lost their jobs and we cannot say the crisis is over before we come back to the creation of employment instead of rising unemployment.

I would like to make my commitment to a high level of employment and social cohesion through a number of actions that I have discussed with some of you.

I have clearly stated my attachment to the respect of fundamental social rights and to the principle of the movement of workers. The interpretation and the implementation of the Posted Workers Directive fall short in both respects. That is why I am committed to proposing, as soon as possible, a regulation to resolve the problems that have arisen. This regulation will be codecided by the European Parliament and the Council. A regulation has the advantage of giving much more legal certainty than the revision of the directive itself, which would still leave too much room for diverging national transpositions and take longer to produce real effects on the ground. But, if we discover during the preparation of the regulation that there are areas where we need to revisit the directive itself, I will not hesitate to do so. Let me be clear – I am committed to fighting social dumping in Europe whatever form it takes.

The issue of social impact assessments for all future proposals was also raised and I agree that this is needed. The first test case for such a social impact assessment should be the revision of the Working Time Directive. On the basis of this impact assessment, the next Commission will consult social partners and will come with a comprehensive legislative proposal.

In the guidelines, I emphasise the importance of services of general interest for our European model of society. The Lisbon Treaty makes this point very clear and I am ready to work with you to develop a quality framework for services of general interest.

I also highlighted gender equality and the need to eliminate the gender pay gap, so I now commit myself to working with you on a Women’s Charter, also as a way of commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Conference in 2010.

In my guidelines, I express my determination to make the Lisbon Treaty innovations in international relations, including the European External Action Service and the post of High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission, work effectively. I believe it is one of the greatest innovations of our Lisbon Treaty and I am committed to reinforcing cooperation with the European Parliament in the field of external affairs in general.

Europe needs the means to match its ambitions, however. As I said in the guidelines, this requires a root-and-branch reform of the European Union budget covering the expenditure and revenue side. We need to move away from a narrow focus on net balances and move towards an approach based on solidarity, burden-sharing and equity. This also includes the question of own resources. The European Union must have a more transparent and efficient way of financing its policies and I am ready – I hope with the support of this Parliament – to take this battle to the Member States as we reshape the Union's budget. I also want to work more closely with the European Investment Bank to look at innovative forms of financing.

I am also committed to smart regulation, and I want to reiterate that the simplification of procedures and the reduction of administrative burdens on businesses, particularly SMEs, will remain a priority in the next Commission. This task – just like the Impact Assessment Board and ex post evaluation – will be placed directly under my authority to fully reflect the priority I give to it. I will also defend – as we have done over the years and sometimes in difficult circumstances – the integrity of the single market because, without a single market and without a cohesion policy, we will never have a European Union.

But why stop there? Why only defend the internal market? I want to complete the missing links to unleash its full benefits for businesses and consumers.

Honourable Members, I am committed to translating these priorities into the organisation of the next College once I have been confirmed by you, but I can already share with you today some organisational changes that I intend to introduce.

I will create the post of Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Civil Liberties, including citizens' and minority rights as a reflection that the European Union is a community of rights and values.

I will also create the post of Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, including security. One of the key tasks of this Commissioner will be to develop a truly common approach to migration: promoting the integration of legal migrants, fighting illegal migration and related criminal activities, and ensuring solidarity between Member States. We need solidarity. We need solidarity when we have to give support to our Baltic friends or countries affected by the gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine, but we also need solidarity when we have to give support to our Mediterranean friends when they are facing challenges with which they cannot cope alone.

I will also create the post of Commissioner for Climate Action to reflect the fact that climate change is a challenge that needs to be addressed across the whole range of our policies. A dedicated Commissioner for Climate Action will also send an important signal that, independently of the level of ambition that comes out of Copenhagen, Europe is serious about maintaining momentum for action.

We also need a fundamental review of the way the European institutions access and use scientific advice. In the next Commission, I want to create the post of Chief Scientific Adviser, with the power to deliver proactive, scientific advice throughout all stages of policy development and delivery. This will reflect the central priority I attach to research and innovation. I think we have a lot to do in this field. If there is one area where the fragmented efforts in Europe are not giving the results we want, it is precisely in the field of research and innovation. I believe that, from fighting climate change to energy security, the potential is there if we want to work together in research and innovation for Europe.

What I propose is no less than a transformational agenda for Europe. In order to realise this ambition, I have suggested a special partnership between Parliament and the Commission. We represent the two European institutions *par excellence* and this gives us a special responsibility to create a true European public space for debate. I am committed to making my contribution to European parliamentary democracy.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this over the last couple of months with President Buzek, which led to many of the improvements proposed in my guidelines, like a regular question time. Following my meetings with the groups, I am ready to take up the suggestion made by some of you, not only to meet your Conference of Presidents on a more regular basis, but also to establish an appropriate dialogue with your Conference of Committee Chairs. Very concretely, I will invite the Conference of Committee Chairs to meet the whole College of Commissioners every year before the adoption of the Commission legislative and work programme.

We are indeed living in very exceptional times, times of uncertainty and power shifts. There may be a fundamental change in the relations between the most important powers in the world and there is indeed a great risk in these times of anxiety of the emergence of national egoisms, of naked nationalism, of ugly nationalism and some forms of extremism. There is a real danger that our achievements in European integration are called into question. That is why I believe it is important to have this special relationship between Commission and Parliament to fight those national egoisms.

Let me finish with a plea to each and every one of you. Now, more than ever, we need a strong Europe and a strong European Commission – a strong Commission, let us be frank, has to be a political Commission – but a political Commission must not be a partisan Commission. As President of the Commission, my party is Europe. The next College, like the current one, will contain a significant number of members from a variety of political families. I am committed to having Europe's political diversity reflected in the College and in the most important positions. Only with this cross-party support, however, can we, in fact, have a strong Europe and a strong Commission.

We need a Commission that delivers on its promises. We also need a Parliament capable of mobilising the effective majorities necessary for a Europe of action. If you want a strong Commission that sometimes stands up to Member States and to national egoisms, you should give the Commission the strong support it needs.

We all have our different political, ideological positions and we come from very different political families but I believe that, in times like the ones we are living in, in times of crisis, apart from our convictions, we also need a strong ethic of European responsibility. It is to this ethic of European responsibility to each of you that I make my appeal – my appeal with passion for Europe. Let us embark on this European journey together.

(Sustained applause)

Joseph Daul, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, last June the people of Europe confirmed their support for the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) by making our group the leading force of this Parliament, for the third time in a row.

Through their vote, our fellow citizens expressed clear choices: the choice of a stable and strong Europe, in a period of crisis and of doubt; the choice of a social market economy endowed with ethical rules; and the choice of a responsible climate and energy policy. Since the PPE Group was the only party to put forward a candidate for the presidency of the Commission, several months prior to the elections, it followed that the people of Europe themselves implicitly approved the choice of Mr Barroso by giving us the most votes.

I, for my part, am proud that the PPE Group made this choice and, dare I say it, I am proud that it took this risk.

Everyone knows what the PPE Group's priorities are: they are the ones that inspired the fathers of Europe and that continue to inspire the majority of the governments in today's Europe. The greater part of these objectives are shared and upheld by the current President of the Commission, Mr Barroso.

Ladies and gentlemen, the PPE Group supports Mr Barroso because he has proved himself. He has proved himself on the energy and climate package and he has enabled Europe to become the world's pioneer in the fight against global warming. It is this pioneering Europe that will be the role model at the Copenhagen conference. He has proved himself on the raising of moral standards in the financial systems, enabling Europe to be the first to learn the lessons of a financial crisis that no one, and I mean no one, had anticipated. It is Europe and the Barroso Commission that are showing our US and Asian partners the direction to go in at the G20.

In the past, Europe was described as a political dwarf. How can one fail to be delighted that, on the two issues of major concern to Europeans – the crisis and climate change – Europe is finally on the front line?

I would add that Mr Barroso is the first candidate for President of the Commission to have involved Parliament so closely in his work and in the definition of the guidelines. He is the first to have proposed a genuine partnership between these two institutions by means of a whole series of concrete measures.

That, I believe, is an important development for European parliamentarianism; it is an opportunity that we MEPs must seize. That is why my group hopes that President Barroso will form a new Commission and set to work as quickly as possible.

Obviously, the President of the Commission could not represent a single party. Obviously, he must compromise with a college of commissioners belonging to several political families. We welcome this because Europe can only be built in a spirit of openness and of consensus-building.

Having said that, Mr President, Madam President of the Council, I have an appeal to make to you. Once the President of the Commission has been elected, you must immediately set about forming the rest of the College, regardless of the Treaty in force.

As for you, Mr Barroso, if, as I hope, a majority of MEPs give you their support tomorrow, this will not be a blank cheque. You know this, but it is my duty to tell you again here. Since the PPE Group shares most of your beliefs, you also have a responsibility: to ensure that, over the next five years, the work of your Commission meets our expectations and those of Europeans.

We have faith in you, but have no doubt that we will also fulfil our duty as legislator under the partnership that you will propose.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention.

(Applause)

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have been asking myself in the last few days why a candidate who is so controversial across all the groups in this Parliament causes so little controversy in the Council. I believe that the answer is obvious. If I had been a head of government, I would also have elected José Manuel Durão Barroso. There could have been no better advocate of the interests of the European Council over the last five years. For this reason, your call, Mr Barroso, for cooperation with Parliament is correct, but it comes too late.

(Applause)

One aspect of the last five years was the fact that you were constantly at the service of the governments in the European Union and that is precisely one of the reasons why there is so much scepticism about you. Many friends are more dangerous than enemies. You had hardly finished your speech with the claim: 'I am everyone's candidate!', before Mr Daul said: 'This is the candidate of the Group of the European People's Party'. What a risk for you, Mr Barroso! What motive would another possible majority in this House have for electing you if your programme is the programme of the Group of the European People's Party?

We could have started with a different majority. In July, we saw a possible majority form in this House on the basis of different considerations among the various groups, which Guy Verhofstadt brought together into a reform-based, pro-European majority. This resulted in the vote being postponed until September and other things would perhaps also have been possible. Unfortunately, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe did not continue to support their leader, otherwise this would have been possible. This is why we are voting today and weighing up whether what you are saying is convincing.

However, you have hardly started to concentrate on one programme before you begin doing something different. In the last few days you have been sending out your messengers on horseback with the following message: '*Moi, j'ai la majorité*', I have the majority'. It may be that you have a majority tomorrow. That could be the case. Perhaps you will have a majority tomorrow, consisting of the PPE Group and the ALDE Group, the majority of whom will vote for you, and, of course, the only group which will vote for you unanimously, immediately and without hesitation: the European Conservatives and Reformists, the party of Mr Kaczyński and his brother, the party of Mr Klaus, the Tory party. As you say, you want to achieve a majority in favour of the Treaty of Lisbon, but this is the party whose members oppose the treaty. How can you lead Europe in a pro-European way if you enter into alliances of this kind?

(Applause)

Furthermore, this is not only about you. It is true that it is about you, but it is also about the question: Barroso – yes or no? It is about the question of whether you gain a majority – yes or no? However, it is also about another issue. It is about the direction of Europe as a whole and that is not your decision alone. In this case, the Council and, above all, this Parliament are also involved in making the decision about the composition of the College and about the portfolios which you will make available and about the programme for the next five years that you will present.

It is about you, but it is also about the question of whether we finally manage to regulate the internal market and the financial markets and about whether we finally manage to put a stop to cheap labour in Europe,

which is destroying the social cohesion of our society. It is also about whether we manage to bring about a change of direction in the European Union which the Commission, as a whole, must support.

Therefore, for us it is also a question of programme-related issues. It is not enough to reduce Europe to the question of an individual person and to the question of whether this individual person has a majority or not. We need more! We need social impact assessments. You have said that you will put them in place. We will judge you by whether you really do this, whether you are prepared to draw up regulations together with Parliament in an interinstitutional agreement.

In future, the Commission must consider in advance what the effects of its measures on the social security systems in the Member States will be. We want and need a directive for public services, for services of general interest. It must not be the case that the Commission will not rest until the last public cemetery in Europe is privatised. This strategy must finally be stopped. We also need a change of direction on wage policy in Europe.

Whichever tool we choose, Mr Barroso, I expect to hear one sentence from you. You have failed to say it again today. However, I expect you to say it once. The objective of the Commission, particularly following the verdict of the Court of Justice of the European Communities in the cases of Viking, Laval and Rüffert, must be equal pay for equal work in the same place for both men and women.

These are the issues relating to programmes and content which we want to discuss with you, but not only with you. It is also a question of who the Commissioners are and which portfolios they have. I do not know what has caused greater damage to Europe, you yourself or the fact that you have not prevented Mr McCreevy from doing what he was able to. We need a change of direction within the EU. This is what we will judge you on.

(Applause)

Therefore, we can see a connection between tomorrow's vote and the final vote on the Commission. There is a way to get there. There is the possibility of achieving greater agreement and trust than is currently the case. However, with regard to your balance sheet for the last five years and to what you have presented us with thus far – I am not talking about what may happen in future, but what is currently on the table – I can say one thing to you with certainty: you do not have the support of my group.

(Applause)

President. – I would like to inform you that we have a new rule of procedure. Perhaps not all of you have taken note of it yet. The rule says that if, during a speech, Members present in the House raise a blue card, they may put a question to the person who is speaking. The question must be no longer than half a minute's duration, and can be asked only with the speaker's agreement. This is a new rule, which we did not have before. This is intended to enliven our debates.

Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL). – *(PT)* Mr President, I will be very brief: Mr Schulz, I listened to you very carefully and I share many of the issues that you put to the President of the Commission, who is now standing again. I even heard you say that Socialists do not only support the right and Europe is not made up solely of the right. I ask you, how many members of your parliamentary group – Socialists, Portuguese, Spanish or English – have already given their support to the new candidate, irrespective of the opinions that you yourself hold, Mr Schulz?

Martin Schulz (S&D). – *(DE)* Mr President, I must admit that I do not know the fellow Member. However, I am pleased that as new fellow Members...

(Heckling)

He has been here for a while? I have not really noticed him until now. After what I have heard, I understand why.

We will decide this evening on the final vote for our group. I do not know how deeply democratic the structures in your party are, but we are a democratic party and so we will decide this evening by means of a democratic vote.

President. – I would like to say that only one question per speech is foreseen, because otherwise we might not finish the debate.

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, since the start of this appointment procedure, as you know, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe has said that what is at stake here is the programme for the next five years, that this is not a question of people or of personalities. This is what counts: the programme that the candidate presents, the one that he presents now in its broad outlines, then the detailed programme, which will be presented towards the end of the year, I hope, when the Commission is finalised.

Secondly, at the request of some of my colleagues, our group has also debated at length whether we should wait before taking a final decision. We supported that in July, because we felt it necessary for the candidate to come equipped with a programme, which was not the case in the past. I believe that it was the right decision to do so, to wait in July, not to appoint and to wait for the proposals that we are going to debate now. However, we felt that, once the candidate had presented his guidelines, there was no point in saying once again that we were going to wait a few weeks or months.

We are going through an economic and financial crisis, therefore we need European institutions and we need a Commission. It is not very responsible ...

(Applause)

... It is not very responsible to say today, 'Let us wait'. Wait for what? Wait two weeks, three weeks, two months, until they come with proposals? They are there. Let us assume our responsibilities, whether we vote for or against, but let us assume our responsibilities.

Thirdly, we were not very convinced by the guidelines presented by the candidate. I believe that these proposals, as detailed as they sometimes are, are based on a flawed philosophy, that is, on the assumption that the recession is over, that a recovery is taking place and that we do not need additional Community policies in order to come out of the crisis. That is a poor starting point, because the end of the recession does not mean that this is the start of the recovery. We may fall into economic stagnation, as is the case in Japan, where they have been waiting for growth for 10 to 15 years. Hence the need to have, in addition, a new integrated Community strategy that goes beyond the 27 national plans. That is the demand we are making as liberals and as democrats, and it is just as important for the Commission to present as quickly as possible a plan for cleaning up the banks. Not 27 different plans, as we have today, but a common, consistent approach set out by the Commission.

I heard, Mr Barroso, that you said in our group that you were prepared to submit proposals concerning both this new integrated Community strategy, which goes beyond the 27 national plans, and this European stabilisation of the banking sector. This is positive, and what we are asking is for these two elements to be detailed and developed in the programme that you are now going to prepare and that you are going to present with the Commission.

Our support is very clear. It is conditional. This means that our support will continue until such time as we see that these elements, that is, a new integrated Community strategy, a plan for stabilising the banking sector, beyond the things you repeated today in your speech, a budget based on own resources, and a mid-term review of financial supervision, are going to materialise in every part of the Commission's programme. On this subject, I must tell you that I continue to believe that it is the structure of the European Central Bank that should be used, not the de Larosière proposals, which are the Commission's and the Council's starting point for the moment.

Lastly, our support will also depend, as you know, on the new structure of the Commission. We want an effective Commission, with powers distributed more evenly than was the case in the past and, in this context, we are also counting on the promise that you made to our group, namely that a particular commissioner from the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, with responsibility for fundamental rights and civil liberties, will be given a place in your team. It is important that this commissioner be jointly responsible with the other commissioners, and not just someone who gives them opinions.

That is why, for the common good of Europe, we need more audacity and a more ambitious Commission, and we hope that you will ensure this and hope, too, that in your definitive programme you will fulfil our expectations.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, President-designate, ladies and gentlemen, I confess that I think I am hallucinating.

Firstly we are told: 'everything has changed, so I am staying!' The reason why Mr Barroso must stay is because everything is changing, and he is the stability in a changing world. So be it.

Then, I hear what Mr Daul has to say. I was part of the electoral campaign in France. In France, we were told, during the electoral campaign, that, on the banks, look to Mr Sarkozy, on climate change, look to Mr Sarkozy, on change in Europe, look to Mr Sarkozy. Now I hear Mr Daul say that, on climate change, look to Mr Barroso, on issue X, Y or Z, look to Mr Barroso. You are going to get a roasting from the Elysée Palace, my friend! You are going to get a roasting! All the same, it is incredible, this whole business! Yes, yes, I know, May 68, it annoys you, you always come out with the same old thing. I will explain it to you one day if you want to hear about it.

All I am saying is that this place, right here, is a place where we have the right to say anything. José Manuel Obama: Yes, he can! He can do anything he likes now; he can do everything that he was unable to do for five years. You will see what happens, and, on that note, Heads of State or Government, Mrs Malmström, be careful, because the days of the little Mr Barroso who listens to you are over. You are going to have to listen to him now, he is going to impose a new integrated policy, not a policy of coordination, on you, you are going to have to follow his lead ... No, but stop, stop, Mr Barroso! We know what you are like! In five years in this House, not once have you said, 'I was wrong', as I, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and others have done ...

For you talk about European values, you talk about European ethics, but the problem is this, Mr Barroso. If you really want to change things, you must explain something to the MEPs and to the citizens: the response to the financial and economic crisis must, at the same time, be a response to the environmental crisis. Moreover, if you want to respond to these crises you have to transform Europe – to reform it is not enough – and by that I mean you have to transform it environmentally and socially. Our production systems must be called into question. The banks: why did they go crazy? Because we have a system that makes them completely crazy. Why? For the simple reason that it is about having more and more, and still more, more quickly.

Is it the case, Mr Barroso, is it the case, Heads of State or Government, that the majority of this House is ready today to challenge the 'more and more as quickly as possible' approach? This is at the root of the crisis, and when people talk about sustainable development, it is not just about a few piecemeal measures, it is about trying to explain and to understand that, while there are areas that need growth, that is, selective growth – renewables, and so on – there are a whole host of areas that need to be curbed. There needs to be a measure, and here I am hallucinating even more.

You talked about the Lisbon process. You talked about research. Mr Barroso, explain something to me. For five years – actually, for four years: last year, after the crisis, you were more cautious – you explained to us that the basis for economic and environmental effectiveness was deregulation. Deregulation. Yes indeed, I remember your speeches, I remember what you said. Then, with the crises, you suddenly realised that it did not work like that. With the crises, and this is to your credit, we never said that you were a man of dishonour, we merely said that, seeing the way in which you, Mr Barroso, have led this Commission, we do not have faith in you. You are a European but, at the same time, you are locked in an ideology that is the very ideology that caused the crisis, not that which solves it.

And, Mr Verhofstadt, that really takes the biscuit, now. Throughout the campaign we said – I am going to finish here, and, besides, Mr Barroso will thank us for it – that we did not want to vote in July. Now, everyone is grateful to us that the vote did not take place in July, because at least Mr Barroso could present his programme. If it was up to Mr Daul, if it was up to Mr Barroso, we would have voted without a programme in July, and everything would have been just fine! So at least thank us for having given you the opportunity to present your programme.

Not at all, not at all, Mr Barroso.

Secondly – but this is rich – you say: 'why postpone further?' For the simple reason, and this has never existed before, that the people of Ireland are going to vote in three weeks' time and if, as I believe will happen, as is thought will happen, they vote in favour of the Treaty of Lisbon, there is another condition for this Commission. You tell us: 'it is absolutely necessary, because we are in an economic crisis, you will see what happens'.

Over the next two months, Mr Barroso will have to form his Commission. He will not have the time to deal with Lisbon, nor with Copenhagen, because he will have to negotiate with Mr Sarkozy. Is Mr Barnier going

to get the internal market? If Mr Barnier does get the internal market, what is he going to give to the Poles, to whom he promised a great Commission? What is he going to give to the Germans? What is he going to give to the British? Because the Commission is all about bargaining! And bargaining is going to keep him busy, but while he is busy bargaining, the others are going to bargain at Copenhagen.

That is the problem; that is the reality. So I shall conclude by saying to you, Mr Barroso, that you are a man of honour, that is true, but you should know one thing: the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance does not have faith in you and will vote against your appointment, because we believe that Europe needs someone better, someone better than you, Mr Barroso!

(Applause)

Michał Tomasz Kamiński, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr Cohn-Bendit may have spoken for too long, and it may be that I hardly agree with him at all, but he always has interesting things to say, and that, after all, is important in Parliament. This gives Parliament the vitality which you spoke of, Mr President, in your speech at the beginning today.

The European Conservatives and Reformists will vote for President-designate Barroso. We will not do this because we agree with you on everything, Mr President. There are, unfortunately, many questions on which we do not agree. I will mention at the outset your enthusiastic support for the Treaty of Lisbon. We do not share that enthusiastic support, but we do share the dislike and condemnation of all forms of national egoism and nationalism which you expressed in your speech.

Indeed, it was to Europe, to our continent, which we want to be at peace and to live on in peace, that national egoisms and chauvinisms brought an ocean of misery. We thank God that today, we live in a Europe at peace.

We do not agree on some of the matters about which Mr Barroso spoke. We are entitled to disagree, and we will defend that right, although some continually question the simple fact that voters in Europe have elected European Conservatives and Reformists, and I promise that they will elect still more of them. We are going to be here, and our voice is going to be heard.

We are entitled, therefore, to say on behalf of our voters that we support Mr Barroso in his difficult mission. I am glad that mention has been made today of European solidarity. I am glad it was said that the Commission – the new Commission under the leadership of Mr Barroso – will direct its efforts to enable us to overcome the economic crisis. This is extremely important, and we are pleased that the ambitious programme which Mr Barroso has presented indeed appears to be directed at the most important areas, where action on our part is needed. This, by the way, shows how great the need is for cooperation between the nations in today's Europe. The crisis has affected all of us, irrespective of the political structure and economy we are part of, irrespective of the region of Europe where our countries are found. The crisis is affecting us all, and all of us must fight the crisis.

Mr President, in giving you support on behalf of our group, I would like to appeal to you to ensure that, in the coming months, Europe does not remain indifferent to what is happening in world politics. I do not hide the fact that, in my opinion, one of the most important tests which awaits the western world is what is happening today in Iran.

Iran is a country which makes no secret of its nuclear ambitions. The President of that country not only denies the horrific crime of the holocaust, but also threatens Israel today with destruction. It seems to me that there should be no place for this type of behaviour, and it should not find acceptance in a modern, democratic world. Our group expects that the European Commission under your leadership will resolutely oppose the undemocratic procedures and undemocratic policies of the present authorities in Iran, which are directed against our greatest ally in the Middle East – against the state of Israel.

We also expect – and I am pleased that this always comes through strongly in what you say, Mr President – that the foreign policy of the European Union will always be a banner for citizens' freedoms, and that it will also promote our common European values beyond our borders.

I am sure that you did not manage to avoid making mistakes in the previous Parliamentary term, but then no-one who is involved in politics avoids making mistakes – that, unfortunately, is the way things are in this world. However, in the hard work which you do undertake, we are counting on you to hold high the banner of European values, and to work for the good – and I would like to stress this – of a common and united Europe.

Lothar Bisky, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, ladies and gentlemen, you represent the continuity of a policy, Mr Barroso, which has contributed to the greatest economic crisis in post-war history. While the casinos in the major financial centres are reopening, the citizens of the world are footing the bill. The consequences of the crisis are unemployment, poverty, lower incomes and less education. You maintain that the financial crisis came primarily from the US and that it was only the bankers who caused the collapse. We say that the political system, including the policies of the EU Commission, was responsible for promoting casino capitalism. The ideology of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation has led to the crisis. Continuing as we have done in the past will result in an even more serious crisis.

The political system must take responsibility, learn from its mistakes and give up its neo-liberal ideals. European policy must focus consistently on the interests of the people of Europe. I cannot identify a focus of this kind in your guidelines. However, I am pleased that in your remarks today, social issues were given greater importance than was the case a year ago.

I would like to illustrate our political disagreement using some examples. You want to adhere to the Lisbon strategy. However, the people of Europe need good jobs at wages which will allow them to live with dignity. We need to put on the agenda a reduction and not an extension of working hours.

We expect the new Commission to restructure the Posting of Workers Directive. Europe must finally give a guarantee that social rights will not be sacrificed to the competitive approach. For this reason, we have proposed, together with some others, a legally binding clause on social progress and a charter of public services, which will give precedence to social security and services of general interest over internal market regulations. From what you have said, I understand that you do not think much of this.

In the Zimmermann report, the European Parliament calls for a minimum wage of at least 60% of the average income in all Member States. You maintain that you can do nothing about this. I think that you could, for example, by means of the employment policy guidelines.

You are focusing solely on the Stability and Growth Pact which has proved to be an ineffective tool, in particular, during the crisis. We want a social pact to replace the Lisbon strategy and the Stability Pact.

You believe that a few new financial supervision regulations will keep the greed of the financial world in check. We are calling for a ban on particularly risky forms of investment and a tax on capital movements.

You, and I quote, ‘support every paragraph of the Treaty of Lisbon’. We want a social Europe instead of a continuation of the radical focus on the internal market. We want a commitment to disarmament and civil conflict management instead of the continuing growth in military capability.

You see Europe as a leading power and we want to spread the ideology of free trade and marketisation of all areas of life throughout the world. We stand for intercultural, multilateral dialogue and the greatest possible support for developing countries in overcoming the economic, food, financial and climate crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us elect a Commission together which sets itself the objective of a social, peaceful, economically sustainable and democratic European Union. If we want to gain acceptance among the people of Europe for the EU project, we need a break with radical free-market concepts and more direct democracy. In this case, Mr Barroso is the wrong man for the job of president.

Nigel Farage, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, I should like to ask Mr Barroso: why the unseemly haste? Why change the rules of the game? Why does your re-election for five years as Commission President have to take place now? Well, of course, the answer is Ireland and the Lisbon Treaty. The plan is to show everybody that the ship is steady, that everything is going well, that all the Irish have to do is to correct their rather silly little mistake – and indeed your working document is written as if the Treaty were already ratified.

But there is a rather important point being missed here: you have been the boss; you have been the governor for the last five years. You have been in charge of overseeing that the Constitutional Treaty was pushed through. But things went wrong, did they not? The French said ‘no’ and the Dutch said ‘no’, but you refused to accept these democratic results and you took part, with many Members of this Parliament, in the absolute deceit that is the Lisbon Treaty.

You told us that the flag and the anthem would be dropped, but I have not seen much evidence of that. No, you rebranded it as the Lisbon Treaty but you could not stop the Irish from voting, and the Irish said ‘no’. But once again you could not accept a democratic result, oh no – the Irish have to vote again!

Where in all of this, given that you are in charge, is the principle of democratic accountability? Well, you might argue that there is not much democracy left in the European Union now, but there should at least be some degree of accountability, and I would argue that, on the eve of what may well be a fourth rejection of this Treaty, the one that kills it off for good, this Parliament should not install you as Commission President for the next five years until we have that result.

If the Irish people say 'no' for a second time, then we simply have to respect what they say, and you have to go as President of the Commission. It would happen in any other walk of life, it would happen in any business, and I suggest that it really ought to happen in European politics.

And what about your record? You have overseen the Lisbon Agenda: it was sunk without trace way before the credit crunch hit us. Now you are telling us we have to have a commissioner for immigration, taking away from nation states their most basic right to decide who comes to live, work and settle in their countries. You have pushed on with your obsession with climate change, which has led to massive costs and no material benefits whatsoever. But, above all, it is the fact that you ignored that Irish referendum, that you said the Irish cannot stop this Treaty: for that reason alone, I simply cannot support you.

But it is possible that I have got this horribly wrong. It is possible that you are the right man after all, because yesterday in the *Daily Telegraph*, a poll asked: If Lisbon goes through without a referendum, would you want Britain to stay part of the European Union? And by 43% to 26% – for the first time in over 30 years – a massive majority of Britons said they want us to leave this European Union if Mr Barroso gets his way. So maybe I got it wrong: maybe you are the right man. We will see.

(Applause and laughter from certain quarters)

Yes, he is very happy to go!

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) Mr President, Europe has reached an historic turning point. Millions of people making a living from an honest day's work want a fundamental change. They want to combat the gross injustices of neoliberalism and global big capital. These include family farmers, smallholders, small business owners and government employees. To be able to do this, they are in huge need of human rights. I am sorry that the commissioner is not here now to hear me speaking in defence of human rights and civil liberties. These rights are necessary so that people can express their views, in other words, enjoy the freedom of opinion, the right to free assembly and freedom of speech without being labelled as fascists, as actually happened here today in this chamber, or shot in the eye, intimidated by police brutality, maltreated, put in prison or subjected to sham criminal proceedings.

When all these events took place in Hungary in autumn 2006, we turned to you for you to do something. You did nothing. Why not? I would ask Parliament's Vice-President, Mr Schmitt, to confirm what happened, why we turned to you. It was because of what happened at a meeting organised by the Fidesz party, a civic party...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council. – (SV) Thank you, Mr President, honourable Members, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words in this discussion. I must say that it is wonderful to be back in the European Parliament. The discussion and speeches here are undeniably more dynamic and entertaining than back home in Sweden.

I would like to congratulate Mr Barroso for giving us such a clear indication of the role that he would like the Commission to play and for his reform agenda for the next five years. I have also listened very carefully to what the group rapporteurs had to say. There is, of course, an awful lot I could comment on, but I will not do that today, because this is not the Council's debate. It is Parliament's debate with the President-designate of the Commission.

As I mentioned, it is not my job to comment on what has been said, but I have listened very carefully to the debate. There are just two things I would like to say. The first thing is self-evident: José Manuel Barroso has been unanimously nominated by 27 Heads of State or Government with various political affiliations. He has our clear support to lead the Commission for another term. This does not, of course, reduce Parliament's duty to scrutinise him and take a decision as to whether to approve or not to approve him.

My second comment is also self-evident, but it bears repeating. We are living in extremely uncertain times with considerable and difficult challenges. We need a strong Europe with an ability to take action and one

in which the European Institutions function properly and are able to cooperate. We need certainty, clarity and stability, so that, together, we can tackle the issues for which our citizens expect results and on which they expect Europe to deliver.

José Manuel Barroso, *President-designate of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all let us address some issues of policy substance.

The Commission does not and has never advocated the privatisation of public services. We believe public services are an important part of our European model of society.

What we believe is important is that those public services work in the framework of a strong single market in respect of Community rules. This is very important. If we want to have a real European Union, we have to have this internal market respected.

Let us be frank about it: sometimes some national politicians, when there is a problem, say it is the fault of Brussels and when they have success, say it is their merit. So please let us not embark on those accusations that it is because of Brussels that there is privatisation. These are national decisions. We have amongst our Member States some countries with some public services that they have decided to privatise but this is not an imposition of Brussels.

I think that the usual exercise of Brussels-bashing goes too far sometimes. Everyone should assume their responsibilities.

The second point is about posting of workers. The principles of the directive are indeed those that have been mentioned, namely by the Socialist Group: the respect for fundamental rights of workers; I said it very often. For us, these are sacred rights: the right to strike; the right of association.

Fundamental rights are something very important. I come from a country where there was a time when there were no civil rights or social rights, so I know what it means to have access to those social rights.

At the same time, we are committed to the freedom of circulation in Europe. Without that freedom of circulation, we are not going to have a Europe. So let us try to reconcile both principles in a way. Let us not give into interpretations of the European Court of Justice. That is why I proposed here a way forward inspired by many of your suggestions and I am ready to work in loyalty with all the Members of this Parliament to achieve it so that we have a stronger Europe, keeping our internal market, but respecting fully the social rights of our workers.

On regulation and deregulation, let me make the point very clear, and I ask you, Mr Cohn-Bendit, find a statement where I advocate deregulation. I have always said 'better regulation' or 'smart regulation'. It is not my fault if in French it is translated as 'deregulation'. Better legislation: *mieux légiférer*, not *moins légiférer*.

(FR) And, Mr Cohn-Bendit, I wish to tell you something. You have an obsession with me. I do not have an obsession with you. On the contrary, I almost feel sympathy towards you because you remind me of my youth ...

(Applause)

There is one political issue that is very important. I may be criticised for many things, and I am the first to admit that there are issues on which myself and the Commission may be criticised. However, we must fulfil our commitment regarding climate change: everyone acknowledges that we are the world's leaders on this issue. I have received compliments, for the Commission, from President Obama, from the United Nations Secretary-General, and from the Nobel Prize winner, Mr Pachauri, who wrote me a touching letter. I will be the first to share this success for Europe with you, since the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance has contributed to the agenda for green growth.

Make no mistake: I am in favour of green growth; I am not in favour of the decline of Europe. This is important. I am in favour of green growth, of viable growth, but I am not in favour of the deindustrialisation of Europe. I am not in favour of cutting our jobs in Europe. The fact is, it is the Commission that has done the most for climate change, and it is precisely the Commission that Mr Cohn-Bendit has made a scapegoat of since the beginning. Even before I have presented the guidelines and even before I have presented myself to your group, you have said 'No'. You have even made T-shirts. They have not sold well, the 'Stop Barroso' T-shirts.

You speak of hallucinations, Mr Cohn-Bendit. Listen! A party put forward a candidate before the elections. I myself heard your proposals. You proposed a UK conservative, Mr Patten. You even, I believe, put the

French Prime Minister forward as a candidate, which shows ... but no, you did not, because I was thinking that that was yet another favour like the one you did Mr Sarkozy, by dividing the left in France.

Mr Cohn-Bendit, the truth is this: if we want to have a Europe that is closer to the citizens, we have to make our choices on the basis of policies. I should very much like the pro-European forces to support a pro-European programme. I have presented a very pro-European programme to you. It is up to you to vote for me. It is not I who decides who must support me. It is you who must vote. I have a pro-European programme, linked to the Treaty of Lisbon. This may not be the best news for everyone, but I believe in it. I am proposing to you now a new ambition for Europe. Indeed, the last five years have been the years of consolidation of the enlarged Europe. I make no apology for having the support of the 27 Heads of State or Government, who were democratically elected and who are on all political sides, of course, because I believe that my role was essentially to bring people together. This is the first time that we have had this enlarged Europe. I make no apology for having loyally worked alongside these Heads of State or Government. It goes without saying that a re-elected President of the Commission will have increased authority. I call on you to give strong support to a Commission that is in favour of more ambition, of more determined progress, and of a European project of solidarity and freedom. I am offering you loyal cooperation. Some people have ruled themselves out of this. That is a shame! I for my part am going to remain committed to my values, and even to the values that you at times defend.

(Applause)

(Mr Cohn-Bendit held up a blue card)

President. – I must explain. Mr Cohn-Bendit is holding up a blue card, but we discovered half an hour ago that the rule in question applies only to speakers who are Members of the European Parliament and not to speakers from outside Parliament, such as speakers from the Commission.

Maybe we should change this in future, but for now we must observe the rules.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – *(DE)* Mr President, Mr Barroso, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to change the tone of this debate and suggest that we all ask ourselves: Who among us does not need to grow and develop? Who among us does not have scope for improvement? Who among us never makes mistakes? A new direction needs to be taken in many areas, not only by the Commission President, but also by us. There are many new paths for us to tread.

I have the feeling that many people here are looking for one person to blame for the problems which face us, instead of working on solving our common problems with new strength, new ideas, enthusiasm and vision. Many people make insinuations and generate mistrust in order to divert attention from their own weaknesses. Many people are also ignoring the election results of 7 June 2009 which form the democratic basis for today's debate.

We accuse the Commission President of doing things that he is obliged to do, in other words, adhering to the treaties and implementing the resolutions. Someone today uttered the fine statement: 'Without freedom there is no solidarity and without solidarity there is no strong, effective European Union.' I would like to add: no strong European Commission. We are all in the same boat. All of us are jointly responsible. Each of us has his or her own share of responsibility. The Commission President has a great deal of the primary responsibility. However, as Martin Schulz said, this is not just about him. His strength depends on us, on the Member States, on the competence and quality of the Commissioners.

That is the next chapter in our book. How will we implement an eco-social market economy? How will we restructure the Commission? How will we create a commissioner for financial markets? What about the diplomatic service? What about protecting the climate? At the end of his speech, our President paraphrased a quotation from Bronisław Geremek: 'Let us all work hard in our own way and make the most of the opportunity to bring about change, rather than running each other down!'

Stephen Hughes (S&D). – Mr President, Mr Barroso might recall my intervention when he came before our group last week. As I said then, Mr Barroso, I read your political guidelines for the new Commission with considerable interest and I actually found that much of the rhetoric contained in the guidelines reflects my own beliefs and political priorities. I am sure of many others on the Left as well.

The problem is, however, that you used pretty much the same rhetoric when you came here five years ago to look for the Commission Presidency then. At that time, you made a number of promises in relation to social Europe on renewing the social agenda for five years that have not been met. You might recall, for

example, saying five years ago on services of general interest: 'I do not exclude the possibility of a framework directive'.

Now five years later, as you have said again today, the EU might establish a 'quality framework for public and social services'. We are not quite sure what that means. We do know what a framework directive means and for us that is a very important commitment that we would like you to enter into. Telling us that you do not exclude the possibility of one is simply not enough this time.

When we looked at your document last week, we looked for specific concrete commitments, but we found virtually none. What we did find – thanks to Google – is that the guidelines themselves, presented as a transformational agenda, are, by and large, nothing more than a recycling of existing Commission texts and the existing policy agenda.

Three broad points on your guidelines:

Firstly, they simply do not address the seriousness of the severe unemployment and social crisis that we are facing and which will worsen in the months if not years to come.

Secondly, we think your words about a crisis exit strategy are premature. You have modified that in what you have said to us today. But what we should be talking about is an entry strategy, a strategy for positive intervention in the labour market, not just at Member State level but at European level.

Thirdly, your transformational agenda is the agenda of the past. The crisis is calling for much bolder and more far-sighted policies than you have in mind. Instead, what the number one priority of the new Commission must be is the launching of a modernised and ambitious new European social agenda.

I have listened to what you have said very carefully again today on the response to the Laval judgment in relation to the Posting of Workers Directive. You have said again today that an implementing regulation, without touching the directive, is the way to go. That simply will not work. The problem is in the directive itself which repeats over and over again that 'Member States 'may'...'. Unless the implementing regulation replaces or overtakes that directive, the problem of Laval will remain.

Also, forgive us if we judge you on your track record. Laval did not happen yesterday. What have you done in the almost two years since the Laval judgment sent shock waves through the trade union movement?

One final question: will you commit yourself today to doing everything possible to bring about a proper gender balance in the next College of the Commission?

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, why now? Why Mr Barroso? These are the two questions which we need to answer.

The question 'Why now?' has already been covered here. We are in the middle of a financial and economic crisis and the preconditions for strong economic growth and the creation of more jobs will not be established overnight. We need an effective Commission and we need a common, long-term European strategy. We cannot start work on this next year; we must begin immediately. This is why we also need to vote now.

Why Mr Barroso? I am pleased about the clear declaration by the Commission President, the candidate, on the social market economy, on competition and on the internal market. As liberals, we also have high expectations and demands. We expect that a common strategy will be developed jointly with the Member States.

In the medium term, it will not be enough to have a network of regulators monitoring the financial markets. We need a single European financial supervisory body. As Guy Verhofstadt has just said, the mid-term review will be decisive for us.

As liberals, we believe that the creation of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights is a positive move. We want him to have genuine authority. For anyone who does not know what is meant by this: data protection and the treatment of asylum seekers at Europe's external borders are both subjects which require more attention.

I would like to say a few words about the comments made here on the political situation. I very much regret that the majority of social democrats will not be voting in your favour tomorrow. The social democrats are thus withdrawing from the pro-European alliance which we wanted to establish, particularly in the case of European policy issues. Mr Schulz, Mr Bisky and Mr Cohn-Bendit are organising a red/red/green blockade

of Europe, or at least they are trying to. The decisive factor is as follows: we cannot defend ourselves against the agreement among the European conservatives, but it is crucial that the liberals and Christian democrats maintain Europe's ability to act.

Jill Evans (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I am speaking on behalf of the European Free Alliance members in the Greens/EFA Group. We believe in equality for all people in Europe. We support independence for the nations and the regions of Europe that are not currently Member States in their own right but that aspire to be, and we campaign for equal rights for speakers of all languages, whether they are official EU languages or co-official languages, and whether they are spoken by the majority or the minority in a Member State.

Mr Barroso, you talk in your guidelines, and you have talked again today, about the need to create a feeling of connection between the EU and its citizens, but this can never be achieved until the EU recognises the real nations and peoples, and that subsidiarity operates at all levels and not just between the EU and the Member State government.

If the European Union is to effectively support us through the economic crisis, lead the way as it must in fighting climate change, protect public services, defend human rights and contribute to international peace and disarmament, then it needs the input of all of us, and that includes Wales, Scotland, Catalonia, Corsica, Flanders and many others.

Across Europe at this moment, there are discussions, consultations and referenda taking place, and I am not talking about Lisbon but about proposals for constitutional change and for greater autonomy in these countries. I regret that you have not acknowledged, recognised or addressed these current developments in your guidelines and you have not brought forward proposals for greater involvement of countries and regions which have legislative powers in EU decision making, something which we in the EFA see as crucial. I would ask you again to agree to do that.

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR). – Mr President, one of the most corrosive criticisms of the EU is that it is more concerned with its own internal systems than in demonstrating leadership on global issues or acting in a way that adds value to citizens' lives. Nowhere has this tendency been more apparent than in the preposterous discussions we have been forced to endure over whether and when to appoint the President of the Commission.

The anniversary today of the collapse of Lehman Brothers is a timely reminder of the parlous state of the European economy and especially that of the UK. Unemployment is on the increase wherever we look, and we are just weeks away from a crucial global summit on climate change. In these circumstances, it was absurd to seek to delay the appointment of the President of the Commission beyond September.

I read President Barroso's political guidelines with great interest. I warmly welcome the opportunity the ECR Group had for a vigorous discussion with him on it. First, our central priority must be restarting economic growth and building long-term competitiveness. In the short term, this means less economic intervention, and resisting protectionism. Then we must ensure a return to sound public finances and work to secure further market liberalisation to restore trade and business confidence and ensure there is proper investment in skills and human capital, as well as in innovation and research.

The Commission has a vital role to play in making sure the EU institutions do not undermine economic recovery through imposing unnecessary and excessive burdens on business. The work done by President Barroso and Commissioner Verheugen in this area has been significant. Tackling excessive regulation and promoting the 'better regulation' agenda – although, Mr Barroso, I myself would have preferred it to be called 'deregulation' – was an area of success of the last Commission. Nonetheless, it is regrettable this success was not more pronounced, and more work is certainly required. We need to have a senior Vice-President of the Commission responsible for this area of work. I urge you, President Barroso, to make such an appointment if you are elected tomorrow.

On the issue of climate change, it is the case that the EU has shown leadership in international negotiations in this area and it must continue to do so. I welcome the emphasis President Barroso has placed on the need to show how fighting climate change can help to modernise our economies.

Another area I wish to highlight is the commitment to reshape the EU budget with a root-and-branch reform. Such a reform is long overdue and it should have been a binding commitment.

Although I, personally, and my group strongly support the renomination of the President and welcome some of the major elements, we do not see eye to eye on everything, as my friend Michał Kamiński has said.

I have grave concerns about the Commission's reported plans in the field of immigration and asylum and, as far as the UK is concerned, retention of national control over our borders continues to be essential.

As President Barroso knows from our discussions, there are problems with the Commission proposals in the field of financial supervision. There is a real risk that key financial businesses will relocate outside the EU to the benefit of no one other than our competitors.

Lastly, there have been references throughout the debate to the Lisbon Treaty. I do not hide the fact, and confine myself to pointing out once again, that the EU has continued to function perfectly well without the Lisbon Treaty in the past three or four years. There is no reason why this could not continue to be the case.

Finally, I quote a paragraph towards the end of President Barroso's manifesto. He said: 'The EU works best when it focuses on its core business. I want to concentrate our limited resources on where we can have most effect and where we can bring most added value.' In other words, I think that means that the EU might do less, but it must do it better.

President Barroso, if these were to be your watchwords in the next five years, it would be an excellent basis for progress but, in any event, you do deserve a resounding vote of support from us tomorrow.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, the institutions do not permit the left to put forward a candidate.

We deplore this single-candidacy condition and the political agreements among right-wing and social-democrat governments that make it possible.

Indeed, this condition denies the existence of a widely held opinion in Europe that is totally opposed to the liberal model of European integration that you embody. This is the model which, without your saying a single word about it, plunges the European ideal into the depths of hostile abstentions from the European elections, in particular, and that is remarkable, in the new Member States.

This is the model that has turned the dream of a protective Europe into a machine for destroying our social rights and our national industries, and which makes peoples compete against one another in order to earn a living. More and more people are saying: 'Nothing good comes of Europe'.

You did not see the financial disaster and the environmental catastrophe coming, despite all the warnings, because there were warnings. You helped them happen – you, and the others – with this dictatorship of free and fair competition, which is crippling our societies and destroying their public spirit and our public services.

Now, you are changing the words but not the deeds. However, your programme can be summed up in one sentence – I do not know whether the French pun can be translated – which is: 'Henceforth it will be the same as before'. It is, however, a great change that Europe needs in order to turn the page on an epoch, on an archaic and bygone era, that of financial capitalism and maximum productivity.

The change could therefore begin by the refusal to invest you with the presidency. That is why our delegation will deny you its vote.

Timo Soini (EFD). – (FI) Mr President, President Barroso, you came to see our Eurosceptic group and we appreciate that. It was time to discuss issues and you had some tough questions, from me among others. The fact that there is only one candidate, however, does not appeal to me. Moreover, if we do not accept you now, will it be how it was in Ireland, with Mr Barroso coming along in a couple of months' time wearing a different tie and then everyone voting again on the same thing? You like the Commission. I have read this document very carefully. You say in it that the Commission is irreplaceable and that it is only the Commission which has the authority to put forward proposals which take the interests of all our citizens into account, and that only the Commission has competence and independence.

Ladies and gentlemen, where are the nations of Europe? Where are the parliaments of Europe and where are the European voters? Do they not say that it is for them that this Union is kept on its feet? I do not actually believe in that very much. Mr Barroso, stand up for the working man, stand up for the workers, because the tired Left can no longer do that. Stand up for the small entrepreneurs: we have no shortage of labour; we have a shortage of employers. Do good work from the bottom up, so that people are able to employ others, and this way Europe can move forward. Finally, President Barroso, no EU taxes, thank you; we already have enough taxes.

(Applause)

Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI). – (ES) Mr President, I wish to direct my comments to Mr Barroso.

Mr Barroso, I have listened to you with great interest, and also great respect, for a very long time, in fact since you were a politician in a country that is very close to us and our hearts, namely Portugal.

However, you have just totally surprised me. There are two reasons for this: firstly, you have demonstrated contempt for the group to which I belong – the group of Non-attached members – by not giving us even a minute of your time to explain your political proposals. We represent many European citizens and you have demonstrated contempt for all our voters.

Secondly, your political plan is weak and your political proposals in the document 'Political guidelines for the next Commission' are poor. These proposals do not even include what you yourself have defended during your term as Commission President. I am surprised that issues such as energy which, throughout your term of office, have been well handled, are now, when you are offering your proposals for the next ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Carlos Coelho (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, Mrs Malmström, President Barroso, I shall begin by offering you my congratulations. I congratulate you first on your five years of work at the head of the Commission, in which you have shown firmness in dealing with the Member States, as on the climate and energy question, and an ability to generate compromise and consensus, as on the financial perspective, despite the added difficulties resulting from enlargement, the institutional crisis and the international financial crisis.

Secondly, I congratulate you on the political guidelines for the next Commission that you have presented to this Parliament. Unfortunately, President Barroso, in a democracy you cannot please everyone. Some people do not like you because you are too European, and others because of ideological prejudice. Other people compare you with the past, forgetting that today there are 27 Member States whose interests have to be reconciled, not just 12 any more, and that, fortunately, this Parliament has greater power and interinstitutional cooperation is more demanding.

Others want to postpone the decision. Postponing it would create a vacuum and would weaken both the Commission and Europe. The world is not waiting for us. Just yesterday, the President of Brazil made a statement that threw the G8 into the wastebasket of history and supported the G20. The world is not standing still while Europe sets its house in order and elects its leaders. Postponing a decision would be to accept that Europe is irrelevant in a more global world.

I am naturally proud that a Portuguese is presiding over the European Commission, but my support is not just an expression of national solidarity. It represents my acknowledgment of the work that you have done, and my agreement with your priorities, which I make mine: economic growth; investment in innovation, training and fighting unemployment; an emphasis on the importance of economic and social cohesion; investment in the environment and the fight against climate change; greater security without curbing freedom; and a strengthening of citizenship and civic participation.

I welcome what you have just proposed to us regarding working together, bringing this Parliament and your Commission closer together for the sake of our common Europe. It is time for this Parliament to give the Heads of State of different political families a reason to unanimously reappoint you to head the Commission. Good luck, President Barroso, and success in your work.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Mr Barroso, I fought my election campaign as the leading social democratic candidate in Austria on the basis of strong European regulation of the financial markets, a change in the Posting of Workers Directive, the protection of public services and an assessment of the social impact of legislation. As none of this was achieved by the previous Commission, of which you were head, I have worked on the assumption that we need a new Commission and a new Commission President. Now you are saying that you will do everything I have asked for. How can we suddenly start believing what you say?

My colleague, Stephen Hughes, has already referred to the fact that the first Barroso Commission has failed to deliver much of what you had already promised. In the next few weeks, you will have the time to prove that you really take this seriously. In this case, taking it seriously means having the support of the people who want to implement these measures.

It has already been made clear that tomorrow you will receive support from many people who have nothing to do with these substantive objectives. You will receive a lot of support from those Members of Parliament

who have prevented these objectives from being achieved or have rejected these objectives, for example, in the case of the Posting of Workers Directive and the public services measures, and who have been strongly in favour of privatisation. These Members will support you tomorrow. You must prove that you can form a new majority in the Commission which really wants to achieve these objectives.

In answer to Mr Lambsdorff, who says that this can only be a German election campaign and that the social democrats are leaving the European path, I would like to say that it is not the social democrats, but you who are entering into an alliance with genuine anti-Europeans and that is the problem. Many of us would be prepared to support you, if the Commission had a clear position on the social dimension. We note the promises that you have made today, but we also expect a decision which will indicate that the matters that I have referred to today will be taken seriously in the policy of the future Commission.

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, in this House there are MEPs, including myself, who will not be placing their confidence in you in tomorrow's vote. I wish to state here the reasons for this decision, and also to voice our concerns to you, because I believe that they deserve to be heard.

We believe that the Commission is rather less strong today than it was five years ago. We believe that, too often, it has deliberately chosen to give way to the Council, so as not to upset anyone. We also believe that it has been unable to use the power conferred on it by the Treaties, this right of initiative which, in times of crisis, should be a real duty of initiative. We believe, finally, that the Commission is no longer the place where the European general interest is formed, so as to make itself heard by one and all, and that none of this is good for Europe.

This Europe needs a vision, it needs powers to think and to produce a new development model, and it needs new solutions to economic issues: how can we achieve more industrial and budgetary integration; how can we prioritise the long term over the short term; how can we ensure, for example, that the banks are there, firstly, to support businesses, households and European investors in the area of regulation; how can we put in place a European regulator who can discuss social issues on an equal footing with his or her US counterpart; how can we implement a pact on employment; how can we achieve more upwards harmonisation in the monetary field; how can we use and demonstrate solidarity; how can we achieve, in the future perhaps, a further enlargement of the euro area, including in the area of sustainable development; and how can we make this transition work, not only in Europe but also in developing countries?

There, Mr Barroso, are some of the questions facing you. This is why I believe that we need a Commission that can revive the European general interest and its vision, quite simply to restore meaning to the idea of Europe. It is on this basis that we shall judge your future actions. Thank you for listening.

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, the depth of the crisis in Europe was caused not simply by unethical behaviour on the financial markets, Mr Barroso. Other causes include growing social inequality, dangerous macro-economic imbalances between the Member States, which led to a lack of solidarity, and Europe's dependency on rising resource prices.

The citizens of Europe deserve a Commission which repeatedly puts these deeper causes back on the agenda instead of turning them into taboos, instead of doing the opposite and instead of shifting the responsibility on to the Member States. We need properly coordinated economic and fiscal policies in Europe. We need collaboration on tax in Europe, which will put an end to tax dumping. Only then will it be possible to stop the spread of social divisions and to finance the environmentally friendly investments that are needed. We need a policy which consistently promotes green technologies and lifestyles in order to bring about a rapid reduction in the EU's dependence on finite resources. This will represent a green environmental revolution.

I cannot find any of these things in your programme, Mr Barroso, which is why I cannot vote for you.

Roberts Zile (ECR). – (LV) Thank you, Mr President, Mr Barroso, for years, some of the smaller new Member States had already maintained a fixed exchange rate for their national currency against the euro before joining the European Union. This allowed the European Union financial sector to invest most profitably in those countries. However, at this time of crisis, for these countries to preserve this strict exchange rate results in a socially dramatic devaluation of people's incomes and in speculative attacks on the foreign currency reserves of those countries' central banks. This costs both their citizens and the European Commission, as the lender

of this money, dear. A speedier introduction of the euro in these countries would reduce these costs and create stability. That is why, Mr Barroso, I should like to see you promote an application of the Maastricht criteria appropriate to these times of crisis with as much zeal as you defend the Treaty of Lisbon. Thank you.

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, I opposed the nomination of Mr Barroso as President of the Commission. Mr Barroso is using the EU Commission to interfere with the democratic right of the Irish people to freely decide to accept or reject the Lisbon Treaty in a referendum on 2 October.

With great cynicism, his Commission has sent employees of the Commission into schools all over Ireland in recent days to speak, supposedly, of how good the Commission of the European Union is – in reality a signal to their parents that they should vote 'yes' for Lisbon. Moreover, a senior civil servant of the Commission has openly participated in public rallies of organisations campaigning for the Lisbon Treaty.

Like Caesar Augustus, Mr Barroso is sending his emissaries to tell the Irish people what they should do. We will embark on democratic debate with anybody, but it is a gross abuse of taxpayers' funds that civil servants should intervene on one side of this debate.

(GA) Mr Barroso's policies are not at all for the benefit of the European workforce and the Lisbon Treaty is not for the benefit of the European workforce, but rather it promotes militarisation and privatisation and, as a result, we will not accept Mr Barroso as president from now on.

Nicole Sinclaire (EFD). – Mr President, President Barroso espouses a Europe of ambition. The EU has certainly achieved that: 27 states in 50 years, and the Lisbon Treaty – if ratified by Ireland – will mark the death of their national sovereignty and the launch pad for the European Union takeover.

But we in UKIP reject Mr Barroso's plan for European integration because we know that individual Member States are not an irrelevance. National sovereignty is the bedrock of our values and the cornerstone of the United Kingdom's democracy. In the EU, human rights – whether individual or collective – take second place to solidarity for Europeans. The two are directly incompatible, yet President Barroso puts them together at the centre of his vision of the EU for the next five years, with solidarity as the cornerstone for European society.

We in UKIP prefer sovereignty to solidarity. When Member States' citizens express views in national referendums, the result should be final, respecting their rights to their opinions, but the EU's version of citizens' rights is to make them vote and vote again in national referendums until they can cave in to the pressure and vote 'yes'.

This is how the Maastricht Treaty and the Nice Treaty were achieved, and now the EU is following the same tactic and forcing Ireland to vote again on the Lisbon Treaty when it has already rejected it, as did France and the Netherlands. What kind of rights are these, when they are rejected out of hand in the name of solidarity? UKIP places sovereignty and the citizen's rights above solidarity. We reject the Lisbon Treaty and President Barroso's vision of it.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Mr President, we need a revolution in democracy. Mr Barroso, just imagine you were to stand for election in Europe, just you and no other candidate. What percentage of the votes would you receive? What would the citizens do?

They would probably have listened to you today and seen that you promised everything to everyone. Hopefully, they would also find out what you did five years ago. That was when you promised most people a very great deal. It is a question of comparing what you promised then with what you are promising now and with what can be expected. I believe that is very, very little.

You represent the old Europe, the botched Europe, the contribution to the financial crisis, as a result of the failure on the part of the Commission, the lack of commitment to climate issues, and so on and so forth. I would be on the side of the majority of European citizens, because I believe that you would not get more than 10 or 12 or 15% of the votes.

Werner Langen (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say in advance that the German conservative (CDU/CSU) Members of Parliament will support you, Mr Barroso, in your bid for a second period of office. However, we do have specific expectations of you and, of course, of the future Commission during this second period of office. I want to make that quite clear.

Our demands are focused on the future but, of course, we have five years' experience behind us and therefore I would like to highlight briefly the changes we would like to see. In our opinion, the last five years have brought high points and low points. The low points included the lack of regulation of the financial markets, because the Commission lacked the courage to take the necessary measures against individual Member States which were blocking progress, the noticeable increase in the power of the Council, and the high-handedness of individual Commissioners who have disregarded the concept of subsidiarity.

We will lend our support to your programme and your guidelines, because we believe that they represent the right approach. We want to ensure that some of the things that are important to us are achieved and I am sure that you will take that into account. Firstly, the model of a social market economy must be the basis of our common policy in Europe, in other words, freedom and responsibility and not just the freedom which was to be found on the financial markets.

The competitiveness of Europe and job security in Europe have to be weighed up against protecting the environment and the climate. I was rather surprised that you are potentially putting this overall approach at risk by appointing a separate climate commissioner. We need an industrial base in Europe and the problems of the world, such as hunger, poverty and disease, can only be solved if Europe is a strong economic power with a base of this kind.

The citizens must lend their support to Europe. Over-regulation is significantly reducing people's motivation and alienating them from the concept of Europe, which is why we want an independent assessment of the impact of legislation.

Fourthly and finally, we want a fundamentally new version of the interinstitutional agreements. Under these conditions, the five-year period of office will be a positive one.

Adrian Severin (S&D). – Mr President, one could not ask a Popular Party politician to be a Socialist, nor a Socialist to vote for a Popular Party politician. It would be as simple as that, if it were not much more complicated.

Why do we feel somehow embarrassed and divided, however, when asked to support your candidacy? Let us be frank. The list of disappointments and failures during the term of office of this Commission is far too long, as is that of the unaccomplished promises and initiatives. Consequently, our European citizens not only lost trust in the European institutions but also their hopes and passions.

In complete fairness, we must also admit that you cannot be held solely responsible for that. The prime responsibility should lie with the national political leaders who always nationalised the achievements and Europeanised the defeats, and who mostly gave priority to national egoism over European solidarity.

Many of your Commissioners, Socialists included, and provided by the same national leaders, are also responsible for lacking enough vision, courage, competence and will. Thus, today we are not just confronting you but those nominating you as the only candidate for one of the most important European positions. Obviously, they did not do so out of respect for your qualities and strengths, but for what they consider to be your weaknesses. Not because they believe you will work for the achievement of an ever closer union with a powerful social appeal, but because they think you will call them individually to ask for their national blessing in advance of each European Commission initiative.

It is paradoxical, at least, that today, the European Parliament as a communitarian institution, rather than consolidating the democratic legitimacy of the future president of the communitarian institution that is the Commission with an overwhelming 'yes', should, through this candidate, challenge the intergovernmental institution that is the Council.

Therefore, at the end of this process of our vote for the college, it will be important if you could prove that you are one of us and not one of them.

Andrew Duff (ALDE). – Mr President, President Barroso should be congratulated for his staunch support for the treaty change agenda throughout his previous term. I think he should also be thanked for publishing a good programme of stability plus necessary proposals for improvement in the challenging policy sectors that we all agree upon.

But I have to say that, as GDP sinks and as our spending increases, we are facing, across the period to 2014, the prospect of a fresh budgetary crisis, and at that time, I do trust that President Barroso will be firmly on

the side of Parliament and is going to oppose the position that we can foresee will be the position of national treasuries.

The fact is that the Union requires a larger budget and a budgetary policy crafted to promote economic recovery. National spending should be transferred to the European budget in places where there are clear cost efficiencies, economies of scale and value added, and where market failure requires stronger European policies to correct it.

We must resource the budget by means of an independent and more progressive and transparent system.

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I am, of course, not referring to the previous speaker, but I would ask you to be fair when interrupting speakers who have exceeded their speaking time. You cut off some people dramatically and let others run over for a very long time. That is not acceptable.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I just want to clarify that Ireland is not having to vote again because someone has said so: the Irish people are voting again because they have decided to do so of their own accord, and they will take their own decision. Secondly, the vote now is different to the last time. We have guarantees that clarify matters for the Irish people, and we also have a guarantee that we can keep our Commissioner.

(The President cut off the speaker)

President. – Mr Kelly, I am sorry but this is a new procedure but we have to apply it correctly. It applies only to questions to the previous speaker, not for statements. Apologies for cutting you off.

José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the Commission. – Mr President, I will start with issues of policy, then politics if I have the time.

Regarding Mr Hughes' questions, I think it is important to clarify those issues that are very important for your group and for me, and for our commitment to a social market economy. On the posting of workers, my commitment to a regulation is intended to address the very problem you highlighted, Mr Hughes. The implementation and interpretation issues that have created uncertainty are the problem. I remind you that a regulation is directly applicable and will take less time than overall revision of the directive. In any case, I have said that, if necessary, we can look at revising the directive.

On Laval, Commissioner Špidla, a member of your Socialist family, has, in agreement with me, conducted a very complete search for practical solutions. You must be aware that the problems you raised do not arise in all Member States. The diversity of labour law in the Member States means that a Laval situation can arise in some Member States but not in others. You, of all people, know that Member States, social partners and trade unions stick to their labour law *acquis*. We needed to fully assess the situation to make sure that the remedy was not going to create a bigger problem than the one it set out to solve. Mr Špidla has carried out that analysis, and that is why I can now propose a solution, trying to get a broad agreement in this Parliament.

On public services, Mr Hughes asked why the Commission has not yet proposed a framework directive. I will point out that my Commission has done very important legal work on clarifying the application of state aid rules to public services. That was the most important issue five years ago, and the truth is that these clarifications have taken much of the heat out of the age-old debate on public services in the internal market. I did not say that there are no more problems. On the contrary, I recognise them. I am committed to completely assessing the situation and I will not hesitate, if necessary, to go further. I have made an honest and loyal offer in discussions with your group, and I look forward to working on it with you, including on the appropriate legal instruments.

On gender balance, I am committed to this and my Commission has a record number of women. I can tell you very frankly that it was a very hard fight to get some Member States to send competent women to the Commission because they did not want to send women. As you know, the initiative on that comes from the Member States. I am committed to doing my best once again. I remember the first Delors Commission had no women and the second had only one. At one time I had nine women members of the Commission, which I believe is very important. I nominated the first woman ever as Secretary-General – the most important civil servant in the Commission – so I am very committed to that issue and I need your support there. Once again, however, please also work with your Member States so that they do not resort to this routine, because for 50 years, some Member States were incapable of making one single proposal for a woman for the Commission.

Regarding the issue of social matters, let us put this bluntly. If you want to attack the caricature of Mr Barroso, then do so, but you know very well that I have often made proposals that were refused by the Council –

including, by the way, some governments from your family. Let us be honest about it. At the last European Council, I proposed that we no longer have cofinancing for the Social Fund for those countries that do not have this possibility, namely the new Member States that are having difficulties. I made that proposal. It was refused by several governments, including some whose leadership, or whose finance minister, is from your party. So I completely disagree. It is not intellectually honest to attack the Commission all the time. You are missing the target. It is easier for you, but the reality is that we are pushing hard. After that Council, I put a proposal on the table – that is now being considered by the Council – to suspend the Social Fund cofinancing rules for countries that are in difficulties. I am committed to social cohesion. How could I not be committed, coming from a country like Portugal that benefits so much from the European Union? I am committed to social and economic cohesion, and that is why I believe this caricature that some try to present is damaging Europe. I agree with what Mr Lambsdorff said before. I would prefer to have the support of the main pro-European political families, but some are excluding themselves from that. That is your choice, not mine.

I want to bring the broadest possible consensus and exclude nobody. Let us be frank: in the history of European integration, it is not only the EPP, not only the Socialists, not only the Liberals, who have made great contributions. From Lord Cockfield, a Conservative, to a Communist like Altiero Spinelli, to the Green movement, there have been many contributions to our European integration. After the election, and with this diversity of views, it is important that we work together for Europe. We need a strong Europe, but there is a contradiction there. On the one hand, you say that you want a strong Europe, you want a strong Commission, you want me to stand up to some Member States that are going national, but at the same time you say 'We are not going to vote for you. We are going to reduce your influence. We are going to weaken you in front of the Member States'. There is a contradiction there, so let us be honest about it. If you want a strong Commission that has all the rights and initiative to defend European interests, at least give me the benefit of the doubt. We are living in difficult times and I have made an honest offer to you, a loyal offer to all Members of the Parliament, in full transparency. You cannot say that I am saying different things to different groups because this is the same programme I am presenting to all of you. Today I have added some complements and clarifications, but it is the same programme. Of course it is a compromise, but Europe only works as a compromise. Europe cannot work on fanaticism, or on dogmatism.

I thank the EPP for the support it has given me. I am really grateful for the support you have given me, but the EPP was the first to say that they do not want this because it is alone. No party has a majority alone, so we have to build a consensus in Europe. Building this consensus in Europe is critically important. Of course we keep our ideological differences and keep up the political debate, but we make an effort to have a stronger Europe. I am committed to that. Are you? That is my question.

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, Mr Barroso did not reply to my charge of interference by the Commission in the democratic process in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Mr President, Mr Barroso, I have a problem which means that I am not going to vote for you tomorrow, but you know what it is, since my group has explained it well. It is a political issue. You do not have a project for transforming Europe environmentally and socially. And yet that is, I believe, what needs to be done today.

However, as Mr Daul elegantly put it, it was the right that won the elections, therefore you are on the right. The situation is clear.

I should like, however, to be able to have respect for the President of the Commission, but I have a problem with this: when I see you, I inevitably think – and I assure you this is true – of your responsibility in the CIA's secret flights.

Between 2002 and 2006, 728 people were transferred to Guantánamo via Portuguese airspace. You were minister from 2002 to 2004. I therefore cannot believe you, Mr Barroso, when you make declamations about Europe being a champion of human rights. What I expect from you – what I hope for from you, because I would like, in the future, to respect you as President of the Commission – is not your memoirs, in however many years' time, but that you will acknowledge your responsibilities in this serious act, which casts a shadow over European values.

Derk Jan Eppink (ECR). – Mr President, there is a saying that if you are not at the table, you are on the menu. The next decade will decide where Europe is going to be. The current leading generation in Western Europe had a holiday from history. We grew up in peace. We grew up in a welfare state. We made debts and passed

them on to our children. But history is knocking on our door. We will have a sluggish economy for years to come; we are facing mounting immigration and are sustaining an ageing population.

Unfortunately, Europe does not have a culture of achievement. The European dream is to retire to the French Riviera as soon as possible. If we do not innovate and develop an entrepreneurial culture as you designed, Europe will be on the menu.

I count on your leadership. May I give you one piece of advice: keep Europe focused on its core task. If you fail there, you will fail everywhere. Remain open-minded and do not propose a European tax because it will provoke a pitchfork revolution against Europe. I have never seen a demonstration in favour of a European tax. It is simply a bridge too far and you will only feed public anger.

I count on your sense of realism to get Europe at the table and not on it, and I wish you good luck in your second term.

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) Mr President, we are aware that Mr Barroso is a walking compromise between the powers of Europe. We know also that he is the lowest common denominator among the governments of the Member States. We know that Mr Barroso also has something to offer for everyone: a hint of Maoism for those on the left, a touch of conservatism for the members of the Christian Social party, a smattering of neo-liberalism, plus a green and socialist approach.

Mr Barroso will, of course, stand as a candidate without opposition, without an alternative. For this reason, he is now having a few tough days and having to listen to unpleasant remarks from the united left and from other critics.

However, this will pay off, because we know that after these tough days, Mr Barroso will probably once again be Commission President and that there will, once again, be uneasy compromises between the large and powerful groups in this House, but also between the governments in the Council, and that Mr Barroso, who has personified the failures of European integration during the last five years, is likely to continue to do so over the next five years. When it comes down to it, we all have very little influence.

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (PPE). – Mr President, let me start by saying that we support President Barroso's European ambition and his programme, and I say that on behalf of 28 Polish MEPs, if not more.

There is one thing in this programme, however, which is especially close to our hearts, and that is energy security. You know, President Barroso, that this House is very much attached to this issue. We need to revisit and reassess both the progress and the deficiencies in this process and to set priorities for the coming months and years.

The present situation is not satisfactory, but rather grey, because, in spite of all the declarations and apparent goodwill, the progress made in terms of energy infrastructure and crisis mechanisms is far from sufficient. The measures taken are not fulfilling all expectations and are still not satisfactory.

We obviously welcome the short-term measures set by the Commission and Presidency, but we expect a long-term vision and determination from the Commission President and, if necessary, for the President of the Commission to face or challenge the inertia and egoism of the Member States. We need a strong Commission and strong leadership from you because we need the Commission to act on behalf of the whole Union and in the interests of the Union's citizens.

Let me emphasise that such leadership should be based on a consensus that you have to lead and build in the Parliament and Commission as well as in the Member States. As you know, this idea was launched here in Parliament three years ago, but there is still a long way to go and we still have to wait for this dream to come true.

I hope that by the end of this legislature, President Barroso, you will make this miracle happen and that you will be given the chance to do so.

In this expectation, we support your candidature and keep our fingers crossed for your Presidency.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). – (SV) Mr President, Mr Barroso, you said in your introduction that Europe and the world have suffered a crisis of values. Why do you not use plain language? What we have suffered is, of course, a crisis for radical market thinking, for which you and your group are among the primary advocates. I promised my voters that I would not vote for you – as many other Social Democrats have done – if you do not guarantee that the Posting of Workers Directive will be amended to strengthen the rights of workers.

Now I hear you trying to sound as if you have complied with this request. However, you say that this request will not be complied with by amending the directive, but by means of a new regulation, which we know to be completely inadequate. At the same time, I hear you painting an erroneous picture of the consequences of these amendments to the Posting of Workers Directive. You have been asked about this before and you have been evasive every time. I will ask you again: will you take action to amend the Posting of Workers Directive, so that European workers receive equal pay for equal work throughout the EU instead of experiencing the wage dumping that we are currently suffering throughout Europe?

Olle Schmidt (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, Europe today is a continent defined by peace and democracy. This was not the case 70 years ago when Europe was at war. This was not the case 20 years ago, either, when Europe was divided into East and West.

Our generation has a responsibility to manage our continent and preserve and strengthen an open and democratic Europe. Mr Barroso, you have a special responsibility.

Europe needs clear leadership and an EU that is both visible and there for the people of Europe in hard times as well as good ones. We need a leadership that listens. You need to do more in this regard. I would like to see more of the commitment that we have seen today, more of the José Manuel Barroso that we have seen today.

Tomorrow you will receive the support of the Liberal Party of Sweden – Cecilia Malmström's party, not because we agree with you on everything, but because we believe that you can do more than you have shown us thus far.

Here are some guiding principles for the continuation of your work.

Protectionism is an abomination – even for a former Maoist. The strength of the EU lies in its open borders and free trade.

Human rights apply to everyone, wherever they are. You need to do more in this regard.

The economic crisis cries out for a global new order, with balanced regulations enabling us to deal with the climate crisis. Free Europe's farmers and give consumers and the market a chance.

The EU does not need more institutional power struggles. Preserve us from that fate! Europe has had enough of lame ducks. Mr Barroso, tomorrow, you will hopefully have the opportunity to establish a new Commission. I hope that you will then ensure that there are as many women as men in the new Commission.

Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE). – (EL) Mr Barroso, as you know, you have made no mention whatsoever of your position on issues such as the protection of biodiversity or your commitments pursuant to the Millennium Goals and the European Union's sustainable development strategy.

I shall focus on the meaning of flexicurity, which you often use to combine flexibility and security. This concept appears to harbour serious dangers in terms of worker protection. Part-time employment, for example, is fine when it is the worker's choice. However, forced employment, where the worker has no choice, but is perhaps unable to find a job, looks like part-time unemployment.

There is a similar problem with forced employment in jobs and with working times that have an adverse impact on citizens' personal lives and their quality of life. If you are elected, what political guidelines do you intend to issue on these matters, in cases which concern you? Also, why do you not mention specific targets for green professions and other such initiatives, not so that you become 'green', but so that you at least indicate which way is the way out of the crisis?

George Becali (NI). – (RO) Mr Barroso, I read your document but, quite frankly, I will vote for you tomorrow because I believe that Europe needs a religious Christian man like yourself, with this kind of upbringing. I think that you will be President of the Commission tomorrow and I urge you, Mr Barroso, to ask God to give you what he gave to Solomon: the wisdom to lead the European Commission. Please God.

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Italian delegation of the European People's Party will support you, Mr Barroso, with our customary respect, our customary friendship and our customary loyalty.

Nevertheless, we call on you to show more courage to enable our institutions to face the momentous times which we are experiencing, and to focus not only on the legitimate concerns of the governments, but first

and foremost on the needs of the young generations, their desire to set up a home, have a family and have children: basically, the courage to fight for a true Europe, one underpinned by our sense of responsibility and not by our political mix. That is why I am calling on my fellow Socialist Members to show the same courage.

Of course, electing Mr Barroso again may be a stopgap measure for the crisis of consensus, which is clearly shown by the outcome of the elections, but a yes vote, albeit a yes vote with conditions attached for the candidate for Commission President, would also give you all an opportunity to play your part at this difficult time, and send a clear signal to the European public, namely, that what unites us is stronger than what divides us, and that only in this way, together, can we help each other out of the abyss.

In short, it is not just a yes to Mr Barroso but a yes to a clear and simple recipe: a Commission created with a contribution from all of you means that that Commission will be more independent, more efficient, stronger and, in other words, more European.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) I would like to discuss a topic which is causing concern to many people in the European Union, including myself. Our economies are going through a very difficult period, a period of crisis, the impact of which is being felt by so-called ordinary people in particular. These people are fighting for their work, for their existence and for their children, and it is precisely this fear and worry which creates such fertile ground for the growth of far-right extremism in the EU and in the Member States.

In the past, far-right extremists concealed their faces under various different masks and guises. Today they parade through public squares and speak openly to the media. In addition, these people, who spread hatred against Roma, Jews, immigrants and homosexuals, are establishing political parties and, unfortunately, are successfully fielding candidates both for national parliaments and for the European Parliament during this difficult period.

Finally, it was not so long ago that we witnessed even here, on the floor of this democratic institution, here in the European Parliament, the arrival or rather the marching in of certain MEPs in uniforms reminiscent of the fascist period of the Second World War.

I would therefore like to ask you, Mr President, what sort of measures need to be adopted in the future, in respect of your role and the Commission as an authority, against such an abuse of the European Parliament and especially in the actual fight against extremism.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – Mr President, Mr Barroso observed that we are living in extraordinary times – true – but extraordinary times call for extraordinary leadership. Are you that leader, Mr Barroso? I did not support you back in 2004 and unfortunately, in five years, you have not done enough to convince me.

A majority of my group, however, is willing to give you the benefit of the doubt, but we will reserve our final judgment until we have seen the full package of commissioners' portfolios and the full details of your political programme, because do not forget, and I hope you hear the irony in this, that the President of the European Commission is a politician, and not a civil servant with job security.

Regardless of the outcome of the votes, this process has strengthened European parliamentary democracy because, contrary to what some in this House fear, obliging a candidate to campaign has not weakened but strengthened the position of Commission President. Because, the way I see it, a mandate by the European Parliament for a political programme is a much more solid base than a nomination on the basis of a backroom deal between national governments.

I also happen to believe, contrary to you, if I listened carefully, that the emergence of a real opposition in this House is very welcome and a healthy sign that European parliamentary democracy is vital and mature.

So, Mr Barroso, the ball is in your court. Will you meet the challenge? Because you have not convinced me yet. But that is not nearly as relevant, Mr Barroso, as convincing the European citizens in the next five years.

(Applause)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

Vice-President

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE). – (NL) Madam President. Mr Barroso, when the credit crunch broke, you did nothing. It was the French Presidency that found the way to the emergency exit. You did not take back

the reins: not with your European Economic Recovery Plan – you failed to make State aid to the car industry subject to strict environmental conditions – nor with a proposal for better financial supervision: you capitulated at the outset in the face of opposition from the City of London. The EU did hold the reins in the global approach to the climate crisis, but you are rapidly throwing them away.

You are threatening to buy most of our CO₂ reductions from developing countries instead of ensuring we emit less ourselves. You could blame national governments for this, but not for last week's appallingly meagre proposal of climate aid to developing countries: EUR 2 billion. This is peanuts compared to the EUR 30–35 billion Europe ought to be providing. In so doing, you are severely hampering Copenhagen's chances of success. There is the credit crunch, the economic crisis, the climate crisis – three tests of genuine leadership. Mr Barroso, three times you have failed to make the grade.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Madam President, as a new Member of this House, I have listened to the many speakers who have focussed on Mr Barroso's track record in office and have voiced many concerns. Many I agree with.

Our paths diverge completely on the Lisbon Treaty, Mr Barroso. However, you have taken a great interest in my constituency of Northern Ireland. For this commitment I thank you. We value the support and close working relationship of Commission officials at all levels with Northern Ireland. I look forward to this relationship continuing and my constituency benefiting from it.

You will know about our past: the impact of violence on investment, and the need for new roads and rail links. You will know about the huge potential for the economy through the development of tourism. To aid our economic development I would urge the Commission to examine what resources will be made available to redress the years of underinvestment.

As many in this Chamber have said already today, it is actions and delivery that count.

Jaime Mayor Oreja (PPE). – (ES) Madam President, Commission President, I want to make a preliminary comment.

We cannot have the same debate after elections as before elections, out of respect for the elections and for the European people. We should not do things any differently from what happens in the national parliaments in this respect.

If the European Commissioners are the result of a majority in each country, our main concern should be that the Commission President is faithful to what the European people have voted for in the European elections, hence the importance and correctness of Mr Barroso becoming Commission President. This is a strictly democratic principle.

There are two points which Mr Barroso made and which I do not have any doubts in clearly and definitively supporting. The first is the extent of the diagnosis of the current situation, which he gave in his speech and comments. We are not only experiencing an economic and financial crisis, but also a crisis of values. This is the first time that I have heard in this House any confirmation of these characteristics. We are not only experiencing a crisis, but also a changing world. That is why, more than ever before, the emphasis must be placed on positive action by individuals and on a change of attitude towards the State and the markets, because we have probably lived beyond our means in many EU countries.

The second point, which I also support, is Mr Barroso's European ambition. Europe needs to elect, prioritise and organise, and the crisis and the Treaty of Lisbon are the two main issues on which the Commission President must particularly concentrate. Tackling the crisis requires a determined Commission and also a Parliament which is capable of tackling the serious circumstances that we are experiencing.

The crisis is not yet over and its landscape is still unrecognisable. It is also forcing us to deal with social inequalities in the European Union. We therefore need the political ambition that you have shown this afternoon, Mr Barroso.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – (ES) Madam President, Mr President-designate, having listened to you closely, I should like to underline a few points on which many of us would agree with you.

Firstly, it is clear that we are facing a crisis, yet many of us believe that, in recent years, Europe has been incapable of developing expectations and hopes that can overcome pessimism.

Secondly, it is clear that we need the European Union, strong institutions and a Commission that knows where it is going. However, many of us think that you cannot be a candidate for re-election to the same

Commission, but rather to a new Commission in order to start a new era in which we are confronted with many more and much tougher challenges.

We need a Europe capable of regulating markets and guaranteeing rights, particularly social rights. However, we really need a Europe capable of adding value in order to correct global abuses and injustices at source.

I have listened to the proposal to include a security-related immigration commissioner in your Commission. I would stress that immigration does not impact solely or mainly on our security, but on our values and our capacity to correct inequalities at source.

As a result, tomorrow's vote will not mark the end of a process, but rather the first step or starting point in a huge task that the new Commission must take on so that, in defiance of those who want the paralysis or retreat of the European Union, it can give a new impetus to a much better Europe than the one we have known in recent years. This new Commission must be capable of asserting itself against the Europhobes and Eurosceptics; it must be capable of defending its independence as a European engine against the Council; and it must be capable, not only of cooperating, but also of continually responding to this Parliament.

Michel Barnier (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Mr Barroso, there are several elements to, and reasons for, our show of confidence and our very clear vote tomorrow.

The first element is that of democratic consistency: with regard to the choice of the 27 Heads of State or Government who chose you unanimously; with regard to what we said during the electoral campaign – it was not so long ago – and with regard to the citizens' vote. We are not going to apologise for having won the elections, even though we are aware – we are well aware, I would say to our fellow Members – that we will have to surround you with more ideas than those of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) alone. Then, there is democratic consistency with regard to the exercise that you have been conducting for several weeks, in the demanding, sincere and humble dialogue with Parliament, and we are here to bear witness to it.

There is a second reason, which is a conviction: the very strong conviction that there will be no strong policies in Europe if the institutions are weak. We need strong institutions. This is why we hope that the Treaty of Lisbon will be ratified. It is a tool box that will make the institutions work. We need a strong Commission that can confront the crisis as quickly as possible.

The third reason is a contract of confidence that we have signed with you. In the face of this, the most serious and most profound economic, financial, food – let us not forget the one billion starving people in the world – and environmental crisis, we need the Commission to show its fighting spirit. We need you, and us with you, to learn all the lessons from this crisis, in terms of governance, regulation, innovation and new policies – I am thinking of the idea of a European savings bank to support small and medium-sized enterprises in the strategic sectors – and, with regard to the most profound crisis, the environmental crisis, to introduce a new model of economic and social growth, of green growth, as you yourself said.

That, Mr Barroso, is why we shall be ready, tomorrow, to sign the contract of confidence with you.

David-Maria Sassoli (S&D). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, your speech today, Mr Barroso, has not changed our opinion. Our view remains strongly negative. Throughout the years of your presidency, the Commission has shown itself to be incapable and lacking in autonomy. This was the case for the financial crisis and the same holds true for immigration policy: the safeguarding of fundamental rights and compliance with Community law must represent two sides of the same policy.

You said in this Chamber that you intend to appoint a commissioner for justice and rights and a commissioner for internal affairs and immigration. Do not do that, Mr Barroso: immigration and rights must stay together so as not to endorse xenophobic policies. You have a majority here in Parliament, a right-wing majority, and clearly we are unable to identify with this majority. I understand the difficulties of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and the Democrats for Europe but, Mr Verhofstadt, do not tell us that the coherent approach that you called for in order to emerge from the crisis consists of the speed with which the Barroso Commission will be formed.

It is obvious that we cannot identify with this majority. Our positions cannot be reconciled with those who do not resolutely fight for full and steadfast freedom of information, with those who do not fight to safeguard rights, and with those who view Parliament as a mere forum to represent national governments.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Madam President, President of the Commission, the growth of energy security is an important item in your programme. The success of the negotiations with Turkey, which led to the signing of the Nabucco agreement, highlights that the European Union is able to represent Member States on the international stage, and I wish to congratulate you on this achievement. I hope that by using the same methods, a similar success will be achieved in securing the required volume of gas at a time when there are countries in the region which want to make their sources available for this project. The future Commission must create an internal energy market, effective competition and a high level of supply security for all Member States.

In this respect, an important role will be played by the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators. Romania has applied to host the headquarters of this agency and I hope that it will enjoy the necessary support. Energy security also depends on the EU's neighbours. We must support neighbouring countries which subscribe to European values and aspire to become part of the European family.

I also want to draw your attention to the still fragile political situation and the difficult economic situation in the Republic of Moldova. Support needs to be given urgently to the new political authorities in Chişinău to help them get through this difficult situation.

Finally, I firmly believe that tomorrow's vote will demonstrate the stability of Europe's institutions and will make a positive contribution to the outcome of the referendum in Ireland.

Catherine Trautmann (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, Mr Barroso, I might as well say it straight away: you did not convince the French socialists for five years, and you are not succeeding in convincing us now with a project in which you are as generous in word as you are general in purpose.

How can you say to us 'vote for me if you want a Europe that is united in its diversity', when it is precisely because we want this Europe that we are recommending waiting for the Irish vote so as to vote on your candidacy?

Armed with the support of the Member States, you preferred to secure your appointment ahead of time and with fewer risks as regards the number of votes required. You thought that the passage before Parliament would be a mere formality: it is not so, and this is just the beginning, for your response does not meet the expectations of the citizens, who are suffering in the crisis and who have demonstrated their anger towards our institutions through their low turnout.

You say that the crisis has changed you and you pose as the great navigator of a united Europe, but you have not been able to guide the Member States towards a truly European recovery plan, and we are still awaiting the concrete and binding measures needed for financial regulation.

You claim to have given us guarantees regarding the social agenda, but all you are advocating is a new regulation, not a review of the Posting of Workers Directive. Moreover, you have not made a firm, and above all clear, commitment on a directive protecting public services.

You show contempt for the MEPs' memory of events. We have not forgotten that, over the last five years, social issues have never been at the heart of the proposed solutions, and it is only now that you are agreeing to a social impact study for each piece of European legislation.

In a period of unprecedented crisis, which is destroying hundreds of thousands of jobs, everything must be done to ensure that the number of European unemployed workers or working poor does not reach 25 million by 2010. For this we need an industrial policy to be adopted.

The citizens need to be set an example of solidarity in order to combat the crisis. Neither in your words nor in your declared ambition for Europe will they find this impetus today.

To carry on as before is disastrous, said the philosopher, Walter Benjamin. You still have a very long way to go to win over the socialists and the social democrats. For the sake of political consistency and out of respect for our electorate, we shall not vote for you.

Wim van de Camp (PPE). – (NL) Madam President. Mr Barroso, the members of the Dutch delegation in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) will be voting for you with conviction tomorrow. This is not only because we are convinced of your qualities but also because we are in a hurry. In our view, the last two months have been a lost opportunity to tackle the economic crisis – and we, the Dutch, are in a hurry. We do indeed want to see more social market economy in your programme – as far

as we were concerned, the previous Commission was rather too liberal in that regard. We hope that you will continue the fight against excessive regulation and make Copenhagen a success, but reduce the number of European Agencies created.

Another matter concerns Europe's citizens. Today, this afternoon, the word has come up perhaps two or three times. That is not enough. The European elections have shown us that we really have our work cut out to win the minds of ordinary people for Europe. The Opel workers who are to be made redundant must immediately think of Europe as a source of hope, a source of work.

Finally, over the last six weeks, you have struck me as a man with passion and enthusiasm. You thrive when challenged. I urge you to keep that up for the next five years: I should like to see it every week.

Glenis Willmott (S&D). – Madam President, we are indeed living in extraordinary times, but Mr Barroso's response to the economic crisis lacks strength and impact and his promises on social Europe have not been kept. Mr Barroso, your political guidelines provide little illumination as to your plans and drag out much of the same rhetoric used five years ago. Of course we need a strong and vibrant internal market bringing jobs and prosperity, but this must go hand in hand with improved social rights in Europe for workers and citizens, not at their expense.

Despite strong pressure from this House to correct this imbalance and calls for a review of the Posted Workers Directive, for social impact assessments and for a more ambitious economic recovery package, we are still waiting. Earlier, you referred to union membership and the right to strike as sacred. Across the UK, unions are once more in talks over strike action in response to problems associated with the Posted Workers Directive, with fears of the undercutting of wages and undermining of collective agreements.

Your answer to my question on this issue last week sounded like warm words, yet you admitted that the Directive falls short of its aims. The problems lie in implementation and interpretation by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). You promised to make amends through a new legal instrument, but the ECJ judgments have shown we need to strengthen the directive to stop the undercutting of wages.

At this time of financial crisis, we need clear legal guidelines and, Mr Barroso, we need the same wage for the same work at the same place, regardless of gender. What guarantees can you give us that this will be the case?

Marianne Thyssen (PPE). – (NL) Madam President, Commission President, President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, these are difficult times, transitional times, times of change – but interesting times too. Institutionally speaking, we are on the way from Nice to Lisbon. I hope we arrive unscathed: financially, economically, ecologically, demographically, even in terms of energy, migration and security, and not forgetting globalisation, the food problem, the fight to preserve our social model – in all these fields we are in the throes of transition. Whether these are dangers or opportunities depends to a great extent on ourselves.

One thing is certain in this regard: only if we take a European approach to the challenges, only if we tackle them with a solid, well-oriented European programme – which you have, Mr President-designate of the Commission – and if we have strong institutions to work with, can we help shape the future ourselves and further develop our socially and ecologically adjusted market economy. We have no time to lose – 'we are in a hurry', as my neighbour has just put it – and for this reason, too, we must press on with the matter of a new Commission. At present, ladies and gentlemen, we have one President-designate, and one only.

We must give José Manuel Barroso our trust. I would ask anyone who disagrees to make sure they can tell friends from enemies – after all, what are you achieving with delays and dissenting votes? If you do not want Mr Barroso, who do you want? Who was your candidate, who is your candidate, I ask the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. If you succeed in your plans, are you sure you will obtain what you consider a better candidate, a better President of the Commission?

Mr President-designate of the Commission, you have my trust, and you will have my vote and that of my group colleagues. I wish you every success, including with the formation of the new Commission: you must be given elbow room to press on with this.

Edite Estrela (S&D). – (PT) President Barroso, the Lisbon Treaty will be ratified and will enter into force within a few months. That is my hope. It is clear from your programme and your speech today, however, that you want to strengthen the European Parliament's powers right away. I agree, because we can no longer

go back to the time when the future of Europe was cooked up between the Council and the Commission, while the European Parliament was given the role of a mere onlooker.

I believe, Mr Barroso, that your next mandate will be decisive for consolidating this new institutional balance between the Commission, the Council and Parliament. Our support is not, therefore, a blank cheque, but an investment.

Our democratic tradition, the protection of human rights, and innovations in the production of cleaner forms of energy and better environmental policies are distinctive European features, but nothing makes us stand out from the rest of the world as much as our social policies. I must therefore express our hope that the Commission over which you will preside, I am sure, will assume the responsibility of protecting, consolidating and improving the European social model and promoting gender equality.

Before I finish, I would like to emphasise that I have made a note of what you said today, your commitments for the future. You can count on the vote of the Portuguese Socialists. However, you can also count on a relationship that will certainly be loyal, but very demanding as well during your next term of office.

I wish you good luck and success in your work.

Markus Ferber (PPE). – (DE) Madam President, Commission President, President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, what is tomorrow's vote all about? It is about doing what many people in this House cannot do and others do not want to do. It is, in fact, about taking responsibility for Europe. I would like to highlight one point. Mr Barroso, I am very grateful to you for mentioning this again in your interruption. It is about taking responsibility for Europe's ability to act during a difficult time, in order to overcome all the problems which have been the subject of justified criticism from citizens and also from this Parliament. I believe that today's debate has helped to clarify the issue of whom Europe can and cannot rely on in future when it comes to taking political responsibility in the years to come.

However, I would like to point out, Mr Barroso, that there is, of course, a whole series of subjects on the agenda which need to be dealt with and you have a great deal of responsibility in this area because you have a monopoly on launching initiatives at a European level.

I would like to look at one more subject which seems to me not to have been covered in sufficient detail in the debate so far and that is agricultural policy. In this area, we are faced with several new challenges. It is not enough simply to mention the fact that the agriculture ministers came to a resolution in the autumn of last year. It is not enough that we have begun a programme of comprehensive agricultural reform, because when the basic conditions change, you must, of course, take a corresponding initiative to help farmers in the European Union. My request is that you take the Commissioner for Agriculture on one side and point out to her that her model will not succeed in guiding this important sector out of the crisis.

We are prepared, and I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues here, to take over responsibility for Europe in the interests of the European Union and the people of Europe.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, Mr Barroso, in February 2008, six months before the global financial crisis, the Hungarian Prime Minister proposed the establishment of a European institution to supervise and monitor global financial trends. Unfortunately, the Council and your Commission decided to set up this institution only after the global crisis had erupted.

Mr Barroso, at what stage are the preparations for this institution? When will the institution begin its work?

My second question is: over the last few years, the Commission has had no success in combating the predominance of the major commercial chains and has protected neither farmers nor consumers. Can we expect concrete and effective measures from the Commission?

My third question is: there is a profound crisis in the dairy sector throughout Europe, with very serious social and political consequences. Do you intend to amend, to revise the neoliberal policy pursued by the Commission thus far, which has failed completely?

My fourth question is: as a candidate for President, do you intend to establish a mediation mechanism? Do you wish to reaffirm your intention to entrust the new commissioner in charge of fundamental rights with the responsibility for historical national minorities, immigrant minorities and the Roma?

Simon Busuttil (PPE). – (MT) Madam President, Mr Barroso, financial and economic challenges have been extensively discussed. Today, however, I would like to focus on citizens' rights and on the citizen's Europe.

We talk of European citizenship, of citizens' rights, freedom of movement, the fight against criminality, the strengthening of security, the fight against terrorism and a common immigration policy. All of the above affect the European citizen, as do economic and financial issues. However, there are also other challenges which affect our citizens in their daily lives and which therefore deserve to be addressed.

We do have a plan, a plan of creating a European space based on justice, freedom and security. We had the Tampere Programme, the Hague Programme, and now that of Stockholm. I believe that we must invest renewed energy in this field. The Stockholm Programme will open up new opportunities. Moreover, there is the Lisbon Treaty that will bestow new and important powers as well as grant a much greater role to this Parliament in this area. This evening you told us, President Barroso, that there will no longer be one but two Commissioners devoted to this field. We were told that there is to be a Commissioner responsible for internal affairs and immigration and another who will be assigned the area of justice, human rights and civil liberties. Let us form a partnership; a close partnership between the Commission and Parliament for a Europe that will indeed be a Europe for our citizens, a Europe that defends our citizens' rights; that protects our citizens' freedoms, that guards our citizens' security.

Yes, I believe that together, we can work towards building a Europe for our citizens, and I wish you the best of luck in tomorrow's elections.

Zoran Thaler (S&D). – (SL) I would agree with the comments of many of my colleagues who have already spoken, but allow me to also put the following questions to you, Mr Barroso: Have you taken stock of your previous term of office? Are you satisfied with your achievements over the past five years? I would imagine that you are and that that is the reason why you are standing for the presidency of the Commission again. However, I also wonder whether you are satisfied with how effective you have been to date as regards preventing financial, economic and social crises? Can you witness, with a clear conscience, the staggering increase in unemployment figures which have now reached millions in the European Union, and the shameless rewards again being paid out by the financial sector to those who have not only plunged us into the worst crisis imaginable, but also threatened us with poverty?

Can you tell us today whether you are going to do things differently in your second term? Are we going to see more of the same, or something new? Is there anything we ought to be looking forward to? What do you think you need to change about the way in which you go about your work?

Allow me to put one more question to you: it is one that you have been going to great lengths to avoid addressing in your policy guidelines. You clearly want to lead the Commission of a European Union that numbers 500 million people. Where is the ambition and drive of our great community when it comes to opening the door to those fellow Europeans who want to join it? What additional efforts will your Commission make in order to speed up this process? Will you offer tangible assistance, i.e. expertise and material resources, to the central government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to help it achieve its roadmap and the criteria needed for its citizens to travel freely within the European Union?

Gunnar Hökmark (PPE). – Madam President, Mr Barroso will have our support tomorrow, not only because you are nominated by all 27 Member States, Mr Barroso, and not only because we need to start work, but also because you have presented a broad political agenda that addresses the main challenges of our time. Of course, we all have different views on that.

We will call on initiatives from you and your Commission based upon the majority of this Parliament, not by trying to impose minority positions, and we will discuss and scrutinise your proposals and take decisions based upon the majority of this Parliament. That is how democracy works, and that is how we work. We are confident not only in you, but also in this Parliament. Just let me say that voting 'no' tomorrow without an alternative means that you do not have an alternative. At the same time as we are calling for action, there are those who want to stop the action. And I must say that with only weeks to go until the Copenhagen meeting, it is not responsible to act in such a way that we shall not have a leadership in place for the Commission. At a time when we need to deal with all the arrangements and legislation on financial markets, the alternative of saying 'no' to a new Commission is not responsible. And to act in a way that we cannot start the political process for economic recovery when jobs are threatened all over Europe is not responsible.

Madam President, this vote tomorrow is very much a vote about the standing of the European Parliament. We, as parliamentarians, are saying that we want Europe to have leadership in the world, but we can never have global leadership if we cannot ensure leadership of the European Union. We will give you our support, and we will scrutinise the proposals, and we will discuss with you, because we have confidence in democracy and the majority we have in this Parliament. Good luck tomorrow.

(Applause)

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Barroso, following this debate I am even more convinced that I am right to back the proposal put forward by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) to support your candidacy, and as Chairman of the Committee on Petitions, I would like to offer you my modest contribution: Mr Barroso, I endorse your objectives and the priorities you set out, but allow me to suggest two areas of greater focus, in particular with regard to what you refer to as moving out of this economic and financial crisis.

I believe, as you do, that this crisis is also, and above all, a crisis of our values, of the basic values of our society. Over the next five years, the European Commission will have to address major challenges. The geopolitical framework has undergone radical change. The emerging countries, the emerging economies such as India, Brazil and Africa, now play a significant role in the real economy. On the one hand, this affords us new opportunities for growth, while on the other, it exposes us to the risk of market hegemonies which, in the long term, could produce higher levels of poverty.

In this regard, the role of Europe, its civilisation and its wisdom is essential to foster widespread, balanced growth and encourage the attainment of civil rights. It represents the genuine integration of different roots and cultures. I am referring to our roots, our Christian roots, which could be the tool with which we can tackle the value aspect of this extremely serious crisis, but only if we use them as a guide in the promotion of development and the integration of everyone's rights and duties.

On the financial level, Mr Barroso, we must assess the need for reform of monetary and fiscal policy in order to defuse the struggle between our currency, the euro, and the old hegemony of the dollar, and also the struggle with the emerging currencies of China and India; to obtain stricter regulation of the financial market together with bans on speculation in energy commodities and, above all, food commodities, whose prices can starve many economies; to bring finance back to its main role of serving production; and to replace or support the traditional economic contributions in depressed European regions with tax incentives.

With regard to the citizens' Europe which you propose to develop by intensifying dialogue and distributing information, I feel personally involved as Chairman of the Committee on Petitions. Therefore, this committee should be called upon if Parliament follows up on the resolution adopted during the previous parliamentary term.

The Committee on Petitions is the first point of contact between the European institutions and citizens. It seeks solutions, provides explanations and promotes actions in response to the numerous and varied complaints made by European citizens. In this connection, Mr Barroso, I urge you to strengthen relations between the Commission which you have the honour to lead and the committee which I chair, the Committee on Petitions, and establish a specific commissioner for it. You have already announced the creation of two new commissioner posts.

A Europe which focuses its work programme on its citizens, as you stated, is a Europe which must provide this committee – which is the forum, the place where citizens' rights have a voice – with greater rights and greater dignity.

Sophie Briard Auconie (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I have examined the guidelines of your programme and I welcome your ambition in each of the major policy areas, including economic policy, with the continuation and creation of activities; the recovery plan; social cohesion; environmental policy, and especially sustainable development; the projects aimed at our young people; the strengthening of European defence; and the continuation of a strong and sustained agricultural policy.

I applaud your ambition to have a conquering, united and protective Europe, as we want. However, I question the European Union's financial standing as regards all of your projects. The Union must have the financial resources for its ambitions. Some of my fellow Members have already stressed this point. It is vital, in my view, Mr Barroso, that we see you undertake to encourage the Member States to increase their contributions to the Community budget substantially from 2014. It is true that the crisis is putting the Member States' budgets under pressure at the moment. All the same, we must look ahead to the post-crisis period and start work now on a Community budget that will meet the needs of European action. I know that you are conscious of this need, as you addressed it in your programme. All that remains today is for you to commit yourself to ensuring that, in future, we, Parliament and the Council will have the resources needed to apply our policies.

Sandra Kalniete (PPE). – (LV) I should like to confirm that the Members of the Group of the European People's Party from Latvia will support President J. M. Barroso's candidature. We shall support you because we hope that you, Mr Barroso, will continue as President of the European Commission to work for a fairer Europe. We consider that fairness should be achieved between all Member States as regards support for farmers, regardless of how long they have been members of the European Union. We also expect that you will take the leadership role in reform of the common agricultural policy and in securing the possibility of fair competition for all Member States. We call upon you to take the lead in the further liberalisation of the European services market.

Europe will only emerge successfully from the crisis if it bases its strategy on a strong single market and a level playing field. European institutions do indeed have a stabilising role in overcoming the crisis in those Member States most severely affected, and Latvia knows this. I would like to thank the European Commission for working with us. The European single currency has proved its stabilising role in these crisis conditions. The Baltic States have set themselves the goal of accession to the euro area, but during the global downturn, this is a very stiff task. That is why we are calling on the Commission to promote a sensible, flexible approach to the application of the conditions of the Stability and Growth Pact and the Maastricht criteria, appropriate to the crisis. I am convinced that the earlier inclusion of the Baltic States and of all European countries in the euro area is in the interests of Europe as a whole.

Mr President, we urge you to move faster in developing a common energy policy to reduce Europe's dependence on monopolies. I wish you success in the vote tomorrow.

Damien Abad (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, Mr Barroso, as a member of the French delegation of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and as a representative of the *Nouveau Centre*, a French political party born out of the UDF, I was keen to address you directly today. Above all, I should like to remind you of the support of the President of the Republic and of the French Government and to applaud the way in which you were able to contribute to the success of the French Presidency.

Mr Barnier and all of my parliamentary colleagues from the French presidential majority now expect that our mission to build a political Europe that can influence the major global issues of the future will be taken up and shared by your Commission.

In order to build this political Europe, Mr Barroso, two pitfalls must be avoided in our view. Firstly, that of presenting competition as an absolute and insurmountable dogma. Yes, Europe needs industrial policy, agricultural policy, energy policy, or energy policy that promotes new technologies as much as it needs competition policy.

The second pitfall to avoid is that of turning this Commission into a mere general secretariat of the Council. We need a Commission that is strong, that makes proposals, that innovates and that drives this European integration. Thus, despite the reservations that may have been expressed by my own political party in France, I am willing today to support your action and to accompany you on this purposeful path on which you seem to want to embark, not least in terms of sustainable development and of the fight against climate change.

However, to ensure that my vote, and that of several of my parliamentary colleagues who still have some questions today, can be as informed as possible, I would like you to make two strong commitments in this House. Firstly, to implement a really purposeful policy in favour of our industries, of our territories and of everything that forges a European identity.

Secondly, to do everything possible to ensure that the European model is the one that best reconciles the market economy with the requirement for solidarity among Member States, regions and populations.

Mr Barroso, today's young people need a Europe that supports them in globalisation and that embodies a new hope, and, as the youngest of the French MEPs, I am thoroughly convinced that these young people want a Europe that both protects them and offers them a new ambition. In the future, it is our task to build Europe together. I am counting on you just as you can count on me.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Madam President, Europe is united. It is a Europe of peace, freedom and democracy. We observe human rights and we want to realise a programme of social market economy – a programme which puts people at the centre of our attention. However, Europe is also diversified. We have many very poor regions, and there is, therefore, a need for a genuine Cohesion Policy. The common agricultural policy actually sanctions two Europes – the old and the new. This requires changes and the

creation of a genuine, unified, united and cohesive Europe. You, Mr President, know this best of all. What action do you intend to take in this area, in order to change this situation?

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Madam President, President Barroso, in my opinion you have succeeded magnificently in the role of President of the Commission. It is easy to criticise but we have to give credit where credit is due. Leading 27 different countries in a pluralist Europe is a challenging task and you have done it well. You have been a balancing factor between the large and small countries, so in this connection I would like to borrow the words of my party's Chairman, Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, who said that you deserved a further term of office. I am greatly in favour of your further term and I will vote for it. What you have accomplished in five years speaks for itself. In my view, there is no longer any need for proposals for new programmes because actions speak for themselves and I hope that the Finnish Commissioner, Olli Rehn, will also enjoy a good and strong position in the next Commission. Most important of all, however, is that tomorrow we will vote in favour of your being able to establish a new Commission. I wish you every success.

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, Mr Barroso has spoken quite often about the extraordinary times we live in, the important issues faced and the leadership the EU has to show in the financial market sector.

However, Mr Barroso, there is one thing I should like to ask you about – and you mention it in the paper you presented to us – namely the European Union's own financial resources. You do not say where they should come from.

In this connection, there is one question that I asked you about at the hearing we had with the Greens/EFA Group last week. Unfortunately I did not get an answer from you; hopefully I will now. My question is: what about a financial transaction tax?

Even Mr Sarkozy has now proposed this, and Mr Steinmeier and others are talking about it now. Belgium and France already have legal instruments to implement it, so why not talk and bring pressure to bear with a view to a Commission proposal on a financial transaction tax?

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Madam President, I have listened twice to Mr Barroso, once in plenary and once at a conference with the European United Left, and I have read his planning positions.

I have one specific comment: we know Mr Barroso's position on the modified policies. We have not seen his position on modified products. Does that mean the importation and marketing of contaminated products is to be tolerated in Europe?

Generally, while maintaining that he is promoting the new ideas which Europe needs, Mr Barroso is essentially promoting and proposing the same failed, neo-liberal recipes which led to depression in Europe, unemployment in Europe and serious social inequalities in Europe.

This approach, by which I mean your approach, Mr Barroso, and your Commission's approach, has created a confidence gap between the leadership of the European Union and European citizens, which was clearly reflected in the last elections, with the massive numbers of European citizens who abstained.

Finally, as you call everyone who does not agree with your programme anti-European, you will not have the ear of all Europeans, especially those who want a different Europe, which is why, in my opinion, Mr Barroso, you are not suited to this position.

Barry Madlener (NI). – (NL) Mr Barroso, you have not managed to gain the support of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament or the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance – which actually speaks in your favour. It will be an exciting election: if I have a look, you can count on approximately half of the votes, so every vote counts. Of course you would like our vote too, that of the second-largest Dutch party in Parliament, the Party for Freedom. We are prepared to give you our vote, but you need to promise to stop the negotiations with Turkey, to make sure that the Netherlands is no longer the largest net contributor to this bureaucratic EU, and to work towards a Europe of sovereign Member States rather than the federal superstate to which you aspire. I invite you to pay us a visit at 22.00 today to discuss this. Who knows, you may make these promises, obtain our support and be able to continue with your work – just in a completely different way from the last five years.

Brian Crowley (ALDE). – Madam President, I would first of all like to wish Mr Barroso well for tomorrow in the vote. Unfortunately, I was of the opinion that the vote should have been held in July so as not to allow

a lacuna of uncertainty to develop. However, in saying that, I think the political guidelines which you have produced, Mr Barroso, clearly outline the kind of vision and ideas that you have for getting things back on the road.

Maybe my biggest appeal to you – not only about coming back to Parliament – would also be to be a bit more critical of governments when they fail to live up to their commitments because, even if we look at the Lisbon Strategy, 90% of the Lisbon Strategy has failed to be implemented because Member States have failed to take action to make us the most competitive and the most dynamic economy of the future.

I know it is difficult to try and pinpoint any one individual state. I would not dare to do so, but if we are leading by example, and, if we are putting down ideas between Parliament and the Commission about the ways we can see of regenerating new growth and about being innovative within the new economy, then the Member States must also step up to the plate and take those actions.

Finally, it saddens me, at a time when there are unprecedented economic difficulties throughout the globe, when we in Europe are seen to take the lead with regard to banking regulation and other areas like that, that we have lost the opportunity because of juvenile political games among certain groups.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Mr Barroso, you are regarded as a champion of environmental protection, and I congratulate you for it.

In fact, last week we had good news because it was finally decided that bluefin tuna, which is facing collapse, would be protected by including it in the list of species protected by CITES. In this respect, I call for this temporary support to become permanent support.

The problem and global paradox in all this is that it is the neoliberal policies that you have advocated to date which have led us into this situation, because they are policies which simply privatise profit and socialise costs.

In this respect, we are facing a serious problem with the environment. For years we have been subsidising fleets, which have depleted our seas and which, in this precise context, are, in many cases, jointly responsible for the disaster. They are now asking for money to overcome the situation which we have caused.

This is absurd and truly difficult to justify democratically. We cannot make these mistakes with people's money.

We therefore call for the common fisheries policy to be revised, specifically based on these new principles.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – Madam President, I am very confident that Mr Barroso will tomorrow secure another five-year mandate as the next president of the Commission. I believe he is the right person for the job and his track record has been impressive.

I also believe that the EU will operate more effectively if the Lisbon Treaty is passed in my country. Those opposing the Treaty in Ireland are spreading scurrilous information about the minimum wage to be EUR 1.84.

People speak of green shoots as part of the economic recovery in Europe. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is a green shoot in itself. The investment community and people who create jobs want the Lisbon Treaty enacted.

The fact that we in Ireland, since the last referendum, have secured the right to nominate one member of the European Commission into the future is a serious change. In addition to that, the legal guarantees relating to neutrality, tax, the right to life, education and the family are important.

These guarantees are important to us. Protocols are the same as the Treaty and, of course, Ireland needs Europe; Europe needs Ireland.

(GA) I wish you the very best of luck tomorrow.

Martin Ehrenhauser (NI). – (DE) Madam President, the European Union is suffering from a dramatic democratic deficit. Unfortunately nothing has changed in this respect during the last five years under the leadership of Mr Barroso. During his period of office, we have fallen into a very severe economic crisis and it has become clear that all the warnings relating to the instability of the financial system were simply ignored. These warnings were definitely made. Mr Barroso talks in his speech about the need to change the architecture of the financial system and to reform the bonus system for managers. I would like to say clearly: Mr Barroso,

that was your task during the last five years and you have not done it. For this reason, I will be voting you out of office.

Personally, I would like to see a young Commission President who takes on the role with plenty of creativity, with the courage to make major changes and, above all, with independence: someone who turns Europe into a true democracy. I am certain that Europe needs a new mood of optimism and this certainly will not come about with Mr Barroso, but only without him.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I would like to ask President Barroso two questions. The first one is as follows: In your speech, you clearly linked your political future with the Lisbon Treaty coming into force. Does this also mean that if you are elected tomorrow and the Lisbon Treaty fails to be accepted by the Irish referendum, you will then resign?

My second question is the following. You have declared war on national egoism which, according to your definition, stems from anxiety and turns into extremism. My question is: who will decide whether people, organisations or parties are still involved in this harmful activity? Or is it about them, as in our case, having as their objective the promotion of national awareness, the necessary preservation of national self-determination? In other words, does this provide us with a basis for talking here in Europe about national cultures, languages and diversity?

José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission. – (FR) Madam President, I would like to begin with a procedural issue. I wish to say, in particular to the non-attached Members, that I did not go to see their group because they did not invite me. It is as simple as that. Of course, I have strong differences of opinion with some of these Members and with others too, but I went to see all of the groups who invited me, all of the legitimately formed groups. I went there for a democratic debate. I like democratic debate. Let us be clear on that.

I shall try to respond quickly to a large number of questions. Moreover, I can see that, at times, Members are no longer here to listen to me, but I am going to make an effort all the same.

I will begin with the issue of bonuses, which was the last question. I would draw your attention to the fact that, at the end of 2004, the Commission – my Commission – made a recommendation on excessive remuneration, not only in banks, but also in the economic system in general. Unfortunately, at that time, no one paid attention to our recommendation.

I am glad that this issue of bonuses and excessive remuneration is now becoming more of a priority and I hope that we will be able to find a solution, on the basis, I might add, of the proposals that we have submitted to the Council. They are on the table: a recommendation, but also a binding part of the Directive on capital requirements for banks.

Many questions focused on energy security: those of Mr Saryusz-Wolski, Mr Marinescu and others. Energy security was, in fact, one of the main priorities of this College, and I also intend to include it in the priorities of the next Commission, if I have your Parliament's consent, since it is to the Commission that Europeans look, and not just the Europeans of the Union. When there was the problem between Russia and Ukraine, President Putin decided to call me specifically to inform me of that problem, and you know just how much time and energy we at the Commission, together with other partners, have put into trying to find a solution to a problem that concerned Russia and Ukraine but which has had consequences for European consumers.

I personally am very committed to these issues. That is why, I might add, we launched the interconnections programme in the Baltic states, and that is why it was the Commission that broke the deadlock on the Nabucco issue – and let us be clear, it was completely deadlocked. I shall therefore include these issues among the Commission's main priorities, but there is, in fact, resistance to the creation of a real internal energy market. I hope that during the next term, with your support, we are going to overcome this resistance that – let us be frank and sincere – does still exist, in order to establish a real integrated energy market in Europe.

You can count on me at the Commission to be uncompromising in my defence of the European interest. What is more, I believe that this problem of energy security is also crucial to the issue of combating climate change.

I will say it again, in particular for the benefit of the Members of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance: one can always be more ambitious but, frankly, I believe that we should welcome the fact that the European Union, acting on the basis of a Commission proposal, is spearheading the fight against climate change. It is clear that, subsequently, we would not have had the agreement of all the Member States were it

not for the work – and I want to make this point – of Mrs Merkel's presidency, and then of Mr Sarkozy's presidency, since they worked to achieve this too, and it is only right to acknowledge it. All the Member States made an effort, but it was on the basis of an ambitious proposal by the Commission that we were able to conduct this fight against global warming, and I am very much counting on your efforts so that we can keep Europe in the vanguard of this fight.

With regard to the social issues, I have already said my piece: I have already given some very concrete undertakings on the issues relating to the posting of workers and on the problems concerning public services. I will be willing to work with you on these principles that I have mentioned and that I have spelt out very clearly today: against social dumping, for the social market economy.

I am well aware that this is an interesting ideological debate, but I believe that we have the answer in Europe. We need an internal market – it is our strength – and, at the same time, a high level of social cohesion. This is a European creation; it is a contribution. In the quotation I included at the start of my document, I quoted a great European contemporary historian, Tony Judt, who lectures at New York University. He said: 'The United States may have the most powerful army in the world, China may sell cheaper goods, but only Europe has a model that can serve as an inspiration to the rest of the world'.

The 21st century could well be Europe's century. I believe that. I believe that we can manage this globalisation not by force but with inspiration. We have a social market economy that is not the property of the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats or the Liberals. It was created by Europe, particularly after the Second World War: not only the European integration process, but also this social market economy aimed at combining free markets, open markets.

Europe is the world's biggest export power. We Europeans must therefore reject protectionism and, at the same time, must promote the European social dialogue model, the European social security model. When I hear certain 'declinists' – the 'crisis-lovers' – say that it is now the Americans and the Chinese who are controlling everything, I say to them: be that as it may, but what is President Obama doing? President Obama is currently attempting – I wish him well – to introduce a national health care system, which we have practically everywhere in Europe, with some differences. It is the Americans who are now taking inspiration from the European model. What are the Chinese doing? They are now considering – with the additional aim of boosting demand – the introduction of a social security system, and I believe that they will have this system, because there will be a rise in prosperity in that country, and this rising prosperity in China is good for the entire world.

What are the Americans and other major powers doing today? They are starting to talk to us about combating climate change. I clearly recall that, when we spoke with them before, the Americans flatly refused to make any kind of target-related commitment in the fight against climate change.

As you can see, I cannot be as pessimistic as some of those who have spoken here today. Of course, we have problems in Europe, consistency problems. In terms of political will, we must work harder to achieve more consistency. We also have a very clear problem, a social problem, which is the most serious of all: the rise in unemployment. Let us be clear, however: it is not Europe, it is not the European Commission that created this financial crisis. You all know where this crisis came from. Immediately after, we reacted. We reacted with concrete proposals. I was in the United States with the French President, when it was the French Presidency, to propose the launch of this G20 process to the US President. It was Europe that instigated this response.

I said at Camp David that just as open societies need the rule of law, legal rules, in the same way, the markets also need rules in order to be legitimate, credible and ethical. That is the European position.

I believe in fact that we should be proud of the proposals we have made. They are on the table. I hope that they will be adopted, and we will see as we go along whether an additional effort is needed.

On the subject of the environment, I believe that this Commission's track record is well known. Someone said that biodiversity is not in there. Re-read my document and you will see that it is in there. Furthermore, one Member of this House applauded our measures to protect bluefin tuna, and I thank them for that. I believe that we have some good credentials there.

With regard to Mrs Beňová's question about fundamental rights, it is precisely in order to give this new sign of commitment that I decided to create – and I would add that the proposal came from the European Parliament, even though I was already convinced on the matter – the post of commissioner responsible for

fundamental rights and individual freedoms. The commissioner will also deal with the issue of minorities, of course, and he or she will be able to report to the Committee on Petitions, which was mentioned here.

I also believe that, as in the national systems, where there is normally a minister for justice and a minister for the interior, we should have a commissioner in charge of justice, fundamental rights and freedoms. There will be another commissioner – because we must also be serious about this, we must also see that there are problems to do with insecurity in Europe and that there are things that we can do together with the added value of Europe – who will also look at other issues, but always with the same spirit: the spirit of security, with full respect shown for individual freedoms and with full respect shown for fundamental rights. That, once again, is what makes Europe.

Someone spoke of Guantánamo. I was one of the first, if not the first, politician in office within a government to call on the US President – this was during the Austrian Presidency – to close Guantánamo. I said this publicly because I believe that we Europeans are against an anti-terrorism campaign that does not respect fundamental rights, as that is how moral authority is lost. On the subject of fundamental rights, I believe that we may have certain disagreements, but that there are no fundamental disagreements with some of the Members who raised this issue. I myself do not need advice from anyone on this issue. At the age of sixteen, I had already taken to the streets of my country to fight against a dictatorship, against the colonial system. Therefore I do not need anyone's advice on how to show commitment to fundamental rights. Thank you, anyway.

With regard to the question on Northern Ireland – thank you, Mrs Dodds: it is true that we have made a great – discreet – effort for Northern Ireland. We set up a special working group and, back when a dialogue had not yet been established between the parties, we helped to bring about this reconciliation.

With regard to the question put by Mr López Aguilar, yes, I believe that now is the time for a new social ambition. That is obvious. We have an unemployment problem that is much greater than before. If you look at the statistics, the truth is that, until the financial crisis, employment was rising everywhere. The Lisbon Strategy, which some criticise, was actually heading in the right direction, overall. There was job creation and growth in Europe. It is just with the financial crisis that we have seen the reverse of the trend in most countries, including your own, Spain. It is the global financial crisis that has put us in a different position. So, now, in this state of social anxiety – not only are there people who are unemployed but there are others who are liable to become so – it is obvious that we must make a social investment. That is why I have called for a new social ambition. I believed that it would be possible to unite the large majority of Parliament around this priority, and I still believe it.

Mrs in 't Veld told me that I had not convinced her. You are very difficult to convince, Mrs in 't Veld. I will do my best, but I will tell you one thing: I will always do my best, not just to convince you, but because I genuinely believe in fundamental rights, freedoms and guarantees. I believe that the Commission has a role in this matter, not only in terms of legislation, but also regarding the signals we send out. I can tell you that, whenever there is a problem in the world, be it Guantánamo or when I meet with Mr Putin, each time I ask him: 'What is happening with Mrs Politkovskaya's killers? How is it possible that a system such as the Russian system, which has the greatest security system in the world, never finds the killers of journalists?' I put the question to President Putin, just as I am currently putting questions to the prime ministers, including even the Chinese Prime Minister, when I speak to him, and just as I am always asking questions about human rights. I am even asking the Japanese Prime Minister why Japan is now carrying out capital punishment again, when there was a moratorium.

Therefore, the Commission is important, not only through legislation, but also through the signals sent out by the Commission and the Commission President, such as the time of the crisis concerning the cartoons in Denmark, where I unequivocally defended and upheld the right to freedom of expression. I believe, in fact, that we can find a fundamental line of agreement on this.

Mr Abad asked some very practical questions, and I would say to him that I support his suggestions and I believe that they are important. I believe that we need an industrial base in Europe. We do not want relocation, but it is important for this industrial base to adapt to the new constraints of global competition and, above all, to the major challenges of climate change and of more sustainable growth. I believe that we have the means to achieve this. That is why I am proposing that, in future, more resources be put into this at European level.

With regard to the budget-related question that someone asked, let us try, above all, to reach a consensus on the main principles. I believe that it would be a mistake to start by talking about the amounts for the

future budget. That would cause divisions. We must first see where there is European added value and, afterwards, decide what the priorities will be. However, I believe that research, innovation and cohesion policy clearly must be important priorities, especially when the new generations are considered. For the benefit of the youngest member of the French delegation, I hope that the young people of this Parliament will support this movement.

Someone asked me a question about the global financial tax, about the tax on financial movements. If it is global, I support it, obviously. I think that it would be an excellent idea but, in any case, let us be clear: I see no point in driving out the financial services that we have now in Europe, whether they be in London, Frankfurt or Paris. We are world leaders when it comes to financial services. What is the point of handing over the leadership to Dubai? I do not see what the point would be. Let us be clear on that. However, if there were a global tax on financial transactions, I think that would be an excellent idea. I believe that there are already quite a number of reasons in favour of that: to prevent, for example, starvation in the world, for it is scandalous what is happening in the 21st century; to help Europe achieve the Millennium Goals; and to fight for more solidarity in Europe. You may not know, but I proposed to the Council that we increase a facility that we have within Europe to provide food aid, because there are poor and newly poor people in Europe, but it was rejected. Those are many reasons, if you will, for a tax, provided that it is genuinely global and that it does not undermine Europe's competitiveness.

To conclude, I would like to say something very important to you. Some have said: 'Why should we elect you? You are the only candidate. Is that democratic?' I myself have very often wondered why I am the only candidate. Frankly, I believe that it was wrong for me to be the only candidate, because, let us be clear, as I am the only candidate, I have been the only one attacked for all this time, the only one criticised. Every time you compare me with your ideal candidate, I lose, obviously. I lose to an ideal candidate. I lose to an ideal candidate from each group. Yet Europe is not built with ideal candidates. Europe is an exercise in responsibility. I believe that there has been no other candidate for the simple reason that the support needed to be a candidate was lacking. That is the reason. A fair few names were mentioned, but I succeeded in achieving a consensus and I am proud of that, because building Europe today, as we have seen in the debate, is – as all of you will admit – an extremely difficult and extremely hard exercise. Europe is very diverse. There are many constraints and many priorities, and so I am proud to be the candidate that has been supported by the party that won the elections, to be the candidate that has received the support of democratically elected Heads of State or Government, from across the political spectrum, and I do not see that as negative. That said, I am no one's secretary-general, and the Commission is an independent institution. I can assure you of that. The Commission over which I preside and over which I will preside if I have your backing will be independent in its uncompromising defence of the European general interest.

I fully understand, as Mrs Estrela and others have said, that the support of those who will be willing to back me is not a blank cheque. I am grateful to all those who have supported me; I cannot name them all. Some of them are still here. I am grateful to you. Your support is not a blank cheque. I think highly of Parliament.

Some say: 'You are too close to the governments'. You forget one thing: before becoming Prime Minister, I was leader of the opposition, and before becoming leader of the opposition, I sat on the benches. I was elected for the first time to the Portuguese parliament when I was 29 years old. I am a politician; I am not a technocrat or a bureaucrat. I defend parliaments and I want to engage with you in this debate.

Therefore, your demands can help me and can help the Commission to do better. This is what I shall aim to do if I have your support.

(Applause)

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

President. – I would like to thank the President-designate of the European Commission. I would also like to thank all those present, as well as those who spoke earlier, for an exceptionally animated discussion. I would also like to thank Mrs Malmström for being with us in this session.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are bringing in new principles of action, new institutional solutions for the European Union. Please remember that the President-designate has told us about the directions of political action for the next five years. He has done this here, in Parliament, where he has met with all the political groups. He

has given us information which is very important, both for us and for our citizens. We will vote tomorrow, after today's long, exhaustive and wise discussion.

(The President continued in English)

Thank you very much once again, Mr President-designate. This was a great opportunity to have your political guidelines and discussion in political groups and also in the plenary session.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Georges Bach (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Mr Barroso's programme is ambitious and demonstrates an overwhelming desire to give our crisis-hit Europe the boost it sorely needs. In my opinion, it would be wrong to blame Mr Barroso personally for all the troubles that have characterised the previous period. Compromising with an enlarged Commission in which decisions are now taken by the 27, and tackling a financial and economic crisis against a backdrop of difficult institutional reform, has certainly not made President Barroso's job any easier. Admittedly, one might have hoped, in these difficult times, to have heard him speak with a more assertive European voice. I believe, however, that he has learnt from his mistakes and that, in future, he will make great efforts both for Europe as a whole and for the small countries. By making social issues a more important part of his programme, he appears to want to respond to the people of Europe, who are yearning for a more social Europe. The idea of a genuine partnership between Parliament and the Commission is a commendable one and is an opportunity to be seized. For this reason I support Mr Barroso's candidacy, but this support is not a blank cheque.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I am pleased to say that, as a Portuguese and a Member of the European Parliament, I will vote in favour of the re-election of José Manuel Durão Barroso as President of the European Commission. I believe his performance during the current mandate, which has been beset by so many political, financial and social difficulties, and the experience he has acquired in this post, justify the support of the governments and the renewed confidence of this House.

I deplore the many attempts – not all of them open or serious – to prevent his candidacy from succeeding, and I note that they were frustrated not only by a lack of any credible alternative but also by the foolishness of their arguments. I regret that Members from my own country cannot resist taking that path, which is as easy as it is inconsequential.

I hope the second Barroso Commission can combine technical competence with that 'something extra'. I also hope it will effectively respect and make use of the principle of subsidiarity, and will choose the safety and solidity of taking small steps, as recommended by Jean Monnet, rather than adopting the fast-track approach that has promised much but contributed little to the real progress of the European project and dream. However much we aim for the horizon, we only get there by putting one foot in front of the other. Let us go the right way.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) What is also at stake in this election is the direction the EU will take in the next few years. The current President of the Commission, who is standing for another term of office, symbolises one possible direction: the EU he represents is that of the interests of the major economic groups.

That is the EU of undemocratic red tape; of political and ideological conservatism; of the accentuation and institutionalisation of profound inequalities and relations of social, regional and national domination; of militarism and external interventionism; and of the institutionalisation of neoliberalism as the only acceptable economic system. That, however, is not and never has been the only possible direction. The alternative to that direction is that of a social Europe, the Europe of workers and peoples. It is an EU that values democracy in its participatory aspects, not reducing it to the formal representational sphere. It is an EU which respects the will of its peoples and the decisions that they democratically express, and which protects public services and workers' rights as essential tools for social development and cohesion. It is an EU of free, sovereign states with equal rights, which supports and promotes the protection of nature, peace and cooperation among peoples.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The statement that Mr Barroso has just made as President-designate of the Commission is a reaffirmation of the basic pillars of the European Union that we know. It also confirms the capitalist, federalist and militarist integration of Europe enshrined in the Treaties of Maastricht and Nice, which the draft Treaty of Lisbon wishes to take even further.

If there were any doubt, his statements are there on the importance of the draft Treaty of Lisbon. They come, in fact, after the anti-democratic pressure exerted by European leaders – which he observed – on the Irish people, who are being forced to have a new referendum, to be held on 2 October.

Even if he now tries to promise to remedy the serious attacks on social and workers' rights that the European Commission, of which he is still the President, carried out in the previous term of office, he has never got to the bottom of those issues or the causes of the current crisis of capitalism that we are experiencing. In practice, what he is proposing is to carry on with the same policy that prioritises free competition, militarism and the interests of economic and financial groups, particularly those of the most powerful countries, as was clear when he said we are the champions of globalisation.

Livia Járóka (PPE), in writing. – (HU) Mr President, I would like to guarantee President Barroso my support as the European People's Party's delegate, and express the hope that the present Europe Commission will be able to continue the job which has been started involving the social integration of the Roma. Important results have been achieved during this cycle, mainly during the last two years, but we are expecting a significantly deeper commitment and a greater sense of initiative in the future from this body which, as the exclusive initiator of Community legislation, can be the driving force in the battle against the poverty and exclusion affecting Europe's largest minority, the Roma.

I hope that the creation of a new commissioner's portfolio for justice, fundamental rights and civil liberties will encourage the Commission's organisation to do more and in a more coordinated manner. I also hope that President Barroso will continue to actively promote his personal commitment to Roma affairs, which he has also expressed on several occasions, and that he will do his utmost to ensure that Heads of State or Government will assume a more vigorous role in devising a comprehensive, integrated programme spanning parties and cycles.

The social challenges affecting Roma and non-Roma alike are so serious and the consequences of inaction are so dangerous that we cannot afford to have the apathy and slip-ups of the previous cycle. We are expecting immediate, brave deeds and a radical change to the attitude held up until now from the past-present President, and for the Commission's to be the flagship of a pan-European Roma Strategy to be developed as soon as possible, based on regulatory norms, a stable budget and clear political commitment.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) If there is one thing that nobody questions across all parties, it is that we are going through a period of economic crisis, which affects countries and makes government decision making difficult.

Since that is the case, having a validated Commission whose president has been elected or a provisional Commission in which this decisive decision is always being postponed makes a difference to how effectively the European Union can combat the crisis.

In view of that, even though they do not deny the evidence of the crisis and even refer to it repeatedly, the arguments put forward by all those who reject and seek to prevent José Manuel Durão Barroso from being chosen as President of the European Commission become mere rhetoric.

In other words, those who think and act in that way have little or no concern for the effects of the crisis, but think only, or almost only, of gaining advantage through some kind of party political manoeuvring which, in these circumstances at least, should justifiably be avoided.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) Support for Mr Barroso from the conservative, liberal and social democrat MEPs follows his unanimous designation as the only common candidate of all the governments of the EU, both neo-conservative and social democrat. The anti-working class policy of the EU does not depend on persons or on the President of the Commission; it is determined above all by its very character as an imperialist union of capital.

The political guidelines presented by Mr Barroso summarise the strategic ambitions of European monopoly capital and form the political programme applied by the political forces of the European one-way street throughout the EU, including by both New Democracy and PASOK in Greece, regardless of whether they are in government or opposition.

The primary objective of this political programme is to shift the burden of the crisis on to the working classes, thereby ensuring that the European monopoly groups are free to safeguard and increase their profits, so that they can reinforce their position as global imperialist competitors when the capitalist economy revives following the recession. This objective will be achieved by adapting to the new conditions of the anti-labour

Lisbon Strategy by 2020 and through an even more vicious attack on the workers' labour, wage, social and insurance rights.

IN THE CHAIR: MR McMILLAN-SCOTT

Vice-President

12. Question Time (Commission)

President. – The next item is Question Time (B7-0203/2009).

The following questions are addressed to the Commission.

Part One

Question No 20 by **Ilda Figueiredo** (H-0277/09)

Subject: Protection of the textile and clothing industries in the context of international trade

The grave predicament of the textile and clothing industries in certain EU Member States, including Portugal, calls for a coherent and concerted public policy strategy in favour of investment in innovation, differentiation, training and conversion.

However, such measures also imply the need, in the context of international trade, to take the necessary actions to protect industry in the Member States, especially in the case of the more vulnerable areas such as textiles and clothing.

What measures is the Commission taking for the protection of the textile and clothing sector in the EU Member States in the context of new free-trade agreements with third countries, especially in Asia and as in the case of South Korea?

What measures is the Commission taking in the context of the urgent need for market regulation in the context of trade, on a worldwide basis and going beyond regulation of the financial markets alone?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission.* – We follow very closely the effects of the financial crisis on our industrial sectors, including of course the textile and clothing sector, an important and strong industry in the European Union.

We reacted to this crisis by setting up the European Recovery Plan complemented by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the Temporary Community framework for State aid matters. These measures have also been relevant for the textile and clothing industry: for instance, the Globalisation Fund support has been used to reintegrate workers laid off in mostly small and medium-sized enterprises of the sector in Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Lithuania and Belgium.

The textile and clothing sector comes from decades of managed trade. Since early 2009, trade in this sector has been fully liberalised. The sector has lived up to the challenge of liberalisation and has undertaken a process of restructuring and modernisation, which has not been easy.

The sector has reduced mass production and concentrated on products with higher value added and technological content. Today European textiles are known in the world for their innovation and technical performance. The sector has been evolving successfully and has maintained a world-class export performance. Market access issues are therefore a priority for it, and I am happy that our renewed market access strategy has been taken up by this industry with positive results.

And, of course, in our trade negotiations, such as the free trade agreement with Korea or the multilateral trade talks, we do take into account the sensitivities of the different industrial sectors, including the textile sector, and we aim for balanced deals.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Just yesterday we were talking here about the problem of the free trade agreement with South Korea, and the Commissioner knows that she needs business organisations. I would like to tell her that I myself have met with the various business organisations in Portugal and they have told me of their great concern at the clauses of this free trade agreement with South Korea. There are also great concerns across Europe.

The trade unions also have their concerns, and anyone who knows the countries of southern Europe, such as Portugal and Spain, and the areas where these industrial sectors predominate, will be well aware of how serious unemployment has become. In some municipalities, Commissioner, it is now over 20%, particularly in the north of Portugal. There are municipalities with textile mills where unemployment is over 20%! We are afraid that this situation may get worse, in a country where there is already considerable poverty. I therefore ask you what specifically is going to be done ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

David Martin (S&D). – It is to Mrs Figueiredo's credit that she shows such concern about the social impact of the closure of textile mills and the damage being done to the industry. But will the Commissioner agree with me that the South Korean Free Trade Agreement actually provides as many opportunities for European textile manufacturers as threats, and indeed gives our quality textiles access to the Korean market?

Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission. – I understand very well the strength of feeling. This is a very important industry and I agree completely with David Martin who has studied the detail of the deal with South Korea.

There is no doubt that we export far more clothing to Korea than they do to us, so there are real opportunities in the market. It is absolutely right that in thinking about everything we do on trade, we need to be mindful of the impact on industries, and that is exactly what we do.

I would be more than happy to continue this dialogue and to provide more information about how we approach this, because I agree completely with the view that we have to support our industries through this economic recession, be mindful of the poverty and deprivation that can occur, and give new trading opportunities that will actually help boost those economies and those sectors. That is precisely what we are seeking to do.

Question No 21 by **Brian Crowley** (H-0281/09)

Subject: EU priorities for Intergovernmental Conference on Climate Change

What will be the specific priorities for the European Union in the context of the United Nations Intergovernmental Conference on Climate Change which will be held in Copenhagen this coming December?

Stavros Dimas, Member of the Commission. – This is a very timely question and I could answer very briefly that the priorities are agreement in Copenhagen for reduction commitments by developed countries, nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries, and finance.

I would, however, like to say a few more words. We now have less than three months until Copenhagen and the climate talks have now entered into a crucial phase.

With 250 pages of negotiating text on the table, the negotiations have not yet gathered sufficient momentum to come to an agreement that is ambitious and detailed enough. However, among most parties there is a sense of urgency and the willingness to focus on areas of convergence. The ultimate objective of the climate agreement is to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius, an objective that was endorsed at the last G8 summit and the Major Economies Forum.

We need comparable and more ambitious emission reduction targets for the group of developed countries, which in aggregate today offer less than 15% reduction as compared with 1990. This falls short of the 25-40% reduction required by science. We welcome the fact that Japan will strengthen its target. The EU has offered to take up a 30% reduction target if others make comparable commitments.

Developing countries should take appropriate mitigation actions to curb the growth of their emissions to 15-30% below business as usual by 2020. The EU proposes that developing countries (except Least Developed Countries) design and implement low carbon growth plans containing their key mitigation actions. These plans would then form the basis for targeted financial and other support.

Adequate international financing will be essential to reach an effective agreement in Copenhagen. Money will make or break the deal. We need to mobilise private investment and promote the establishment of a robust international carbon market, but substantial public funding will also be required. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the global partnership on technology, which aims at doubling investment in low carbon technologies. Furthermore, we have to strengthen support to the poorest and most vulnerable countries to adapt to the increasing adverse effects of climate change.

Last week, on 10 September 2009, the Commission adopted a communication on stepping up international climate finance, which aims at speeding up the international negotiations. There is a daunting task ahead of us, with intense negotiations over the coming months – but failure is not an option.

Brian Crowley (ALDE). – Mr President, I would like to thank Commissioner Dimas for his answer.

Very briefly, do we know what the real position of the United States of America is, now that there is a new administration, and are they using the same reduction figures that the EU is proposing? Secondly, with regard to Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are huge producers of CO₂ emissions and other emissions, what role will they play, and what pressures can we in the European Union put on them to meet the same standards that we are demanding of our own?

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Mr President, Commissioner, whenever we talk about climate change, we talk about measures for adapting to climate change, as well as for reducing the causes leading to climate change. I would like to ask the following question with the Copenhagen conference in mind: what priority is given to energy efficiency growth, including for developing countries, and also, what discussions are you having about the drinking water crisis, and obviously, the food crisis?

Paul Rübzig (PPE). – (DE) Is there an impact assessment of the changes to European competitiveness which will result from a reduction of 20% or 30% and of how that will affect small and medium-sized businesses and, above all, jobs?

Stavros Dimas, Member of the Commission. – Regarding the United States, the new Administration has committed to reductions which are considerably more ambitious than those of the previous administration. However, they are still not as ambitious as those to which the European Union has committed, and fall below the level that science is telling us is required in order to keep global warming below 2°C, as was agreed by all the leaders of the major economies in July 2009 in L'Aquila, including the Americans, the Chinese and the leaders of the other countries that you mentioned.

But the discussions in the United States are ongoing. The Markey-Waxman bill has been voted on in the House and is now going to be voted on in the Senate. There are quite a lot of provisions which need clarification, and we have to see what the net result will be at the end, because this bill could be more ambitious than it appears to be today.

For example, if the calculation of emission reductions includes those achieved by investments in 'avoided deforestation' – depending on whether this is calculated in the United States' emission reduction target, or in the financing, or whatever – this is something which must be clarified in order to determine the comparability between the targets of the United States and the European Union and other developed countries.

The fact is that we are encountering a very positive attitude from this Administration, we are working closely with them, and we hope that together we shall work for a good result in Copenhagen, namely an agreement with the elements that I described previously.

Regarding Brazil, China, India, Mexico and other developing countries, of course we expect from them a reduction in the rate of growth of their emissions of the order of 15% to 30% below 'business as usual'. This is again what science is telling us is necessary in order to keep global warming below 2 °C. Reductions by developed countries alone will not suffice.

Some of these countries have already taken national measures which will lead to reductions in emissions, either by energy efficiency measures or investments in renewable sources of energy, but we need to intensify our cooperation with them – exchange of information, cooperation regarding technologies and transfer of technology – in order to achieve the reductions that we need.

Regarding cost reduction and, as you mentioned, energy efficiency, clearly all investments in energy efficiency are win-win-win situations. For example, by reducing the consumption of imported oil, not only do you save money, and you do not pay it to the oil-producing countries, but you also reduce CO₂ emissions.

In many countries, especially developing countries, where there are problems with air pollution – the air pollution problem in China, for example, is very well known – there will be the collateral benefit of improving air quality.

Concerning the related problem of water and food, both of these are objectives of the European Union's policies. We do support policies that will improve the sanitary quality and supply of water, especially in very

poor countries. Regarding food, we were very careful, for example, when we examined the Biofuels Directive, that there should be no competition between feedstocks for food and biofuel. We always take account of these important issues.

Regarding the impact assessment and the issues of competitiveness, these were discussed at length when we adopted the Energy and Climate Package. Many studies have been carried out not only by the Commission but also by industry and by various sectors. The provisions that we have in our legislation will provide the assurances needed to preserve the competitiveness of other European industries, especially small and medium-sized enterprises by, for example, granting free allowances, in many cases up to 100% of their emissions.

So this is something that we are taking into account and, of course, the same applies when we go to 30%. Additionally, if we go to 30%, it will mean that we shall have an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen where all developed countries will undertake similar comparable reduction targets to the European Union and developing countries will accept mitigation actions which will create a level playing field for the whole world. We shall then have comparable reduction obligations which will mean that the problem of competitiveness will not exist.

Question No 22 by **Silvia-Adriana Ticau** (H-0301/09)

Subject: Measures to stimulate investment in increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies

The European Environment Agency recently presented provisional statistics for the year 2008 concerning the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. According to those statistics, emissions in the EU-15 fell by 1.3%, and those in the EU-27 by 1.5%, over 2007 levels, which represents an important step towards achieving the Kyoto Protocol objectives of an 8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2012 over those in 1990, the reference year.

In view of the fact that the reduction in CO₂ emissions is mainly due to the increase in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies in the transport and housing sectors, and in energy-intensive industries, can the European Commission state what concrete measures it has in mind to help the Member States stimulate investment in increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies?

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – (EL) Mr President, the honourable member of Parliament has rightly highlighted the ongoing improvement in terms of the reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases, which is due in part to energy efficiency measures and the increased use of renewable sources of energy in the transport and housing sectors.

The Commission would point out that energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy also serve other political objectives, such as improving the security of the energy supply of the European Union, strengthening its competitiveness, creating jobs and improving citizens' standard of living.

On account of all these benefits, the Commission is continuing to improve the legislation and programmes of the European Union in this specific sector and to provide financial support.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Given that we have a timeframe of 10 years until 2020 and that notable results for reducing greenhouse gas emissions may be achieved in the area of energy performance in buildings and the transport sector, and that we are in the midst of an economic crisis and people are losing their jobs, we must emphasise that the green economy can create millions of jobs. We must come up with specific solutions for specific situations. This is why I hope that the solution will be that you, the European Commission, will join efforts with Parliament, and we will be able to find innovative solutions for increasing investments in energy efficiency. Parliament has proposed interesting solutions: an increase in the European Regional Development Fund's rate from 2014, the creation of a new special fund commencing in 2014 and the opportunity to apply a reduced VAT rate, with energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies in mind. Perhaps you could tell us more about this.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – A simple question: how does the Commission suggest that Member States should balance the increased use of renewables with the need to keep electricity prices low for competitive purposes?

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) What investment incentives should be put in place to speed up the move to renewable energy sources in private households and not just in industrial and commercial enterprises?

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – (EL) Mr President, in answer to Mr Kelly's question, greenhouse gas emissions trading is expected to generate a lot of money for the Member States' treasuries and measures which governments can take include using some of this money to support people on low wages or people who are 'fuel poor'. There is therefore a way and the money is there, apart from anything else, to reply to Mr Kelly's question.

The new Directive on renewable energy sources requires the Member States to provide support and to introduce reforms at administrative level and to infrastructures, so as to facilitate the development of renewable energy sources. Every Member State has undertaken to achieve certain targets by 2020 and must submit a national action plan by June next year on renewable energy, analysing how the targets will be achieved.

As far as the review of the Directive on the energy performance of buildings is concerned, the Commission has also undertaken to provide even more Community financing and to propose new financing to support the implementation of this directive. The Commission is already providing direct funding for various projects relating to energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy, such as:

- a series of research and development endeavours based on the research and technological development framework programme;
- EUR 727 million for the period 2007-2013 under the programme entitled 'Intelligent Energy – Europe', to help remove obstacles to the development of renewable sources of energy, improve the business environment and raise public awareness;
- over EUR 500 million for projects relating to offshore wind farms under the European economic recovery programme, to give impetus to private investment in this particular sector, and
- the initiative to finance sustainable energy, which is being managed jointly by the Commission and the European Investment Bank, has a budget of EUR 15 million for 2009 and is designed to mobilise funds from the capital markets and the Marguerite Fund, the European Fund for Energy, Climate Change and Infrastructure, which is being managed by the European Investment Bank.

The Commission is also encouraging the Member States to use a large part of the money available from EU cohesion policy funds to support projects relating to energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy.

Question No 23 by **Czesław Adam Siekierski** (H-0299/09)

Subject: Development assistance in an economic crisis

In this current period, when we are having to contend with an economic crisis, is there a realistic chance of putting in place specific conditions to help the countries most affected? I am referring above all to the very poor countries of the third world. Would it be possible to increase the aid for developing countries? If our own internal problems, such as an insufficient budget or a lack of time, do not allow us to do that, then what is being done to speed up the take-up of funds that have already been assigned to developing countries? My question is essentially whether it is possible to simplify the procedure for allowing this assistance to be increased.

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – Within its field of competence, the Commission has so far responded rapidly to help prevent disastrous social consequences in developing countries, in particular in the least-developed countries, most of which are ACP states.

These measures include honouring aid commitments and leveraging new resources, acting counter-cyclically, improving aid effectiveness, sustaining economic activity and employment, revitalising agriculture, investing in green growth, stimulating trade and private investment, working together for economic governance and stability, and protecting the most vulnerable in developing countries.

Concrete actions and procedures have already been put in place to speed up delivery of aid. An ad hoc 'Vulnerability FLEX' instrument will mobilise EUR 500 million from the European Development Fund. This V-FLEX is complementary to actions taken by the World Bank and the IMF, and will target the most vulnerable countries with poor resilience capacity, giving rapid grant assistance to help them to maintain priority spending, notably in the social sectors.

As the V-FLEX utilises previously unallocated reserve funds, it represents additional financing for these highly vulnerable countries. EUR 80 million has also been mobilised for the funding under the existing EDF FLEX mechanism for countries that suffered significant export losses in 2008. In addition, the mid-term review

of cooperation strategies for countries funded from the EC budget is currently under way, and the mid-term review for ACP countries funded from the EDF has been accelerated in order to re-define and adjust the national strategies and allocations in early 2010.

Nevertheless, it is important to recall that development policy is a shared competence within the EU. The prime responsibility for delivering on the ODA commitments lies with the Member States themselves. I strongly believe that the crisis should not be an excuse for our Member States to water down donors' aid and promises, and I will insist on remaining committed to delivering the promised aid levels, both for EU Member States as well as for other donors. In this regard, we very publicly monitor Member State ODA through our annual Monterrey survey.

On the basis of the information gathered from Member States, we foresee the EU collective ODA increasing from EUR 49 billion in 2008 to EUR 53.4 billion in 2009 and EUR 58.7 billion in 2010. This also means that, without additional steps by Member States to fulfil their individual targets, the collective targets for 2010 will not be achieved. Moreover this crisis has also shown that we have to strengthen the mechanisms for delivering ODA, as the honourable Member rightly pointed out.

The International Aid Effectiveness Agenda embodied in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action are now more important than ever. In these difficult economic times, we have a particular responsibility towards the world's poor to make sure our development assistance is being channelled effectively. I will defend this approach personally at the November Development Council, and the global financial crisis will be at the centre of my political concerns during the weeks ahead.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Thank you for your explanation. Should the EU not be more active at international level? I am thinking of financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which should be more flexible when determining aid levels and granting aid during the crisis. How can we eliminate tax irregularities and the illegal transfer of profits out of poor countries by various firms? Finally, how can we fairly liberalise commercial exchange to benefit those who deserve help?

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Particularly at times when resources are in short supply, it is important to take targeted action in order to provide the right amount of aid to the right people at the right time. Therefore, my question is: What future measures are planned to evaluate the efficiency and quantify the effect of economic assistance?

Karel De Gucht, Member of the Commission. – As far as the first question is concerned, the cooperation with international institutions – the IMF, World Bank – we are working very closely together with those institutions, for example, for the vulnerability flex. In fact, it is together that we have been identifying the countries that should primarily take profit from this new instrument.

We have also insisted repeatedly to the institutions to grant more loans to the developing countries and, out of the USD 280 billion drawing rights, USD 8 billion will go to the developing countries. So I think we are really at the forefront of influencing the international institutions going in that direction and that will also be the stance of the Commission, of Mr Almunia and me in the meetings of the World Bank and the IMF at the beginning of October in Istanbul.

As far as the second question is concerned, I honestly think that this was the subject of my first reply. I detailed how this should happen. I am ready, of course, to repeat it, but it comes down to the fact that we especially have to pay attention that the aid is used in the proper manner.

Question No 24 by **Fiorello Provera** (H-0289/09)

Subject: Demographics and development policy in Africa

According to a United Nations study, the population of the African continent could double to two billion by the year 2050, at which point the population of Africa would be double that of the continent of Europe. The average fertility rate in Africa is five children per woman, compared to 1.7 in the Far East and 1.47 in the European Union.

What measures does the Commission intend to propose, in relation to long-term immigration and environment policies among others, to adjust external relations and development cooperation policy to take account of this data?

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – The Commission shares the concern of the honourable Member that population growth in Africa and the long-term impact of high fertility rates could contribute significantly to increased pressure on Africa's natural resources and determining the development trajectory of the African continent.

Fertility rates tell an important part of the story; according to the UN Population Division, Africa's overall population today is 8% lower than if its fertility rate had stayed at its 1970 levels. Indeed, its fertility rate is expected to decline even below 2.5% by 2050. In urban parts of the continent, an emergent middle class is having fewer children at rates comparable with Europeans. This story is one of promise, of the countries which have attained political stability and achieved impressive economic growth.

Aware of these challenges, the European Commission has a development policy geared to fight poverty, promote sustainable development and tackle political challenges in order to help foster stability. In this field, the Commission is also bound by the strategy endorsed by the 1994 international conference on population and development, further reviewed in 1999.

The strategy has extended the concept of family planning to that of sexual and reproductive health and rights. It emphasises human rights, the empowerment of women, the importance of investing in health and education and the provision of comprehensive reproductive health services to all those who need them. In particular, the education of women has an impact on their reproductive behaviour.

Many studies have found a strong correlation between education and fertility; as literacy improves, fertility rates tend to decrease. Across all of its programmes the Commission expects to commit around EUR 1.7 billion to education for the years 2007-2013; more generally, we are firmly engaged in increasing the level and effectiveness of the collective EU aid to health systems delivering universal coverage of basic services including reproductive health. In this respect, under the EU agenda for action on MDGs – Millennium Development Goals – the EU has undertaken to contribute an additional EUR 8 billion, of which EUR 6 billion for Africa, to health, providing that all aid commitments are fully met.

In order to address environmental pressure, it is of key importance to ensure that local livelihoods are sustainable. This means combating desertification and land degradation and enhancing agricultural productivity, halting over-exploitation of biodiversity, forests and other natural resources including oceans and inland waters; and, finally, ensuring that climate change remains within certain limits and assisting African populations to adapt to climate change.

The Commission, together with the EU Member States, is working on an environmental integration strategy to ensure that development cooperation efforts contribute to these objectives. Our preparations for the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit are to be seen in this light.

At present, the EU is working with the African Union and other regional organisations to strengthen their capacity to address environment and climate change issues. It promotes important initiatives to enhance forest governance, especially through forest law enforcement, governance and trade.

Fiorello Provera (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, my question was meant to highlight one particular aspect: that global population growth has an impact both on the use of raw materials and on pollution. However, in developing countries this demographic increase is particularly large, with social and economic consequences too. My question is: would it not be possible to implement aid policies for developing countries in conjunction with family planning policies, possibly through the NGO system?

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – (DE) It is an interesting fact that two thirds of the population of Africa live in only eight of the 53 states. The problem of overpopulation in Africa is clearly limited to individual countries. To what extent are these facts influencing the development policy of the European Union?

Karel De Gucht, *Member of the Commission*. – We do not have a specific family planning policy, but this can and does happen at the request of the governments concerned. A lot of maternal deaths result from abortions in unacceptable circumstances. In countries where the legislation allows abortion, the Commission will also support these programmes. So whether or not we take such measures really depends on the countries concerned.

With respect to the second question; I must say that when you look at the African continent and the birth rates, as I explained in my introduction, there is a clear relationship between economic development, the degree of urbanisation and fertility rates. This is not a new phenomenon. We have seen it in all countries all over the globe. One can expect, with global urbanisation and, hopefully, increased growth figures, that the

fertility rates might go down. This is not limited, as the honourable Member is suggesting, to some countries. It is rather a phenomenon that is linked to the development of the country concerned.

Question No 25 by **Jim Higgins** (H-0274/09)

Subject: Suspension of negotiations on free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia

In the light of the clear evidence that there continue to be killings of trade union activists in Colombia, and particularly in the light of the fact that in 2008, there was an increase of 25% in such killings, is the Commission prepared to recommend a suspension of negotiations on a free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission*. – The protection of human rights is of the highest priority in the European Union's relations with Colombia. We are therefore following the situation in Colombia very closely.

We are well aware of the difficulties confronting trade unionism in Colombia, and the continued killings of, and threats against, union leaders and members.

We know this from our information sources, from the reports and statements issued by international treaty bodies, as well as from my own discussions with bodies such as the European Trade Union Confederation.

Serious concerns remain concerning the effective application of the ILO core conventions in the country. We are consistently urging the Government to step up efforts to protect the most vulnerable population groups and to investigate and punish all human rights violations.

Recent attacks on human rights defenders and trade unionists have been the subject of démarches by the EU troika ambassadors in Bogotá and were also raised during recent high-level meetings between European Union and Colombian officials.

Moreover, we have recently launched a bilateral human rights dialogue with the Colombian Government which provides a channel for a more regular and systematic exchange of information and experience in the human rights field, and will help inform technical cooperation.

Furthermore, we are seeking to include additional guarantees in the planned multiparty trade agreement in order to improve implementation of core labour and environmental conventions in Colombia as part of the Sustainable Development Chapter. We are also proposing monitoring by civil society institutions on the implementation of labour laws. We hope that in this manner the agreement will help to improve the situation for labour rights activists in Colombia.

Jim Higgins (PPE). – I know that human rights are a high priority, and I am at a loss to understand why the European Union, which prides itself on being the champion of human rights in the world, should even contemplate a trade agreement with a regime like that of Colombia.

Twenty-seven trade unionists have been murdered since the beginning of January 2009. This figure speaks for itself, and it has been proven in the past that the way to get the message across is to hurt these countries economically, as happened in the case of the sanctions against South Africa.

I genuinely believe that we should be sending a delegation to Colombia to see the actual situation at first hand, rather than holding a dialogue with them. We should have people out there on the ground, and we should suspend any trade negotiations with Colombia until such time as we are assured that human rights there are on a par with the rest of the world.

David Martin (S&D). – I am very pleased that Mr Higgins has asked his question. He is absolutely right about the situation he has described and you yourself, Commissioner, have now acknowledged the facts of the case.

Will the Commission, in the light of this, firstly suspend their GSP+ agreement with Colombia and, secondly, suspend our negotiations for a free trade agreement, until we get the assurances from the Colombian Government that trade unionists, human rights activists and others can go about their business safely in that country?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission*. – I am grateful to both, and I understand the passion and strength of feeling. I am not convinced that suspending negotiations will achieve what both honourable

Members would wish to achieve. What I think we have to do is to continue the dialogue, continue working to include in our discussions and, more importantly, in our agreements, an absolute guarantee along the lines that both honourable Members are looking for.

That is the approach that I have taken. It does not mean, I hasten to add, that I have not invited those who have already talked to me to continue with their contribution to making sure that we are on the right lines, and, of course, I keep it under review, but at the present time, that is the course of action I have decided upon.

Question No 26 by **Georgios Papastamkos** (H-0261/09)

Subject: International trade recovery

The visible slowdown in international trade growth figures in 2008 was followed by a further contraction in 2009, far exceeding the actual extent of the economic recession. The European Council (Brussels, 19-20 March 2009) 'recognising that free and fair trade is a key element for global recovery', called for 'a swift conclusion of bilateral trade negotiations and of the WTO Doha Development Agenda'.

Can the Commission provide the following information:

What trade funding initiatives has it taken? What progress has been made by current trade negotiations and what measures are being envisaged to consolidate EU external trade flows?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission*. – It is true, of course, that international trade has been particularly deeply affected by the crisis. The World Trade Organisation secretariat estimates that global trade will drop by 10% in 2009, with a 14% decline in developed countries and about 7% for emerging countries. This calls for ambitious reactions, which is what we have been doing, both on trade finance, multilateral negotiations and bilateral negotiations.

Together with Member States, we have taken a number of important steps to increase the availability of trade finance. Where commercial parties were no longer willing or able to provide export finance insurance, Member States have stepped in via the export credit agencies.

With regard to short-term insurance, this has been facilitated by the Commission decision to temporarily relax the conditions to offer such support. We furthermore agree to temporary relaxation of the OECD rules on medium- to long-term credit insurance.

At the multilateral level, we strongly endorse the commitments made in the G20 context for national export credit agencies to make available sufficient government export credit insurance capacity where this is needed, and we also support the efforts by multilateral financing organisations to make available new trade financing facilities or increase the envelopes of existing ones.

To make sure we consolidate and increase exports, we are continuing to pursue the various trade negotiations we have engaged in. Honourable Members know that the priority on the multilateral front is, and remains, an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive conclusion to the Doha Round, which would reap great benefits for the world and, of course, for the European economy.

The recent meeting in New Delhi which I attended has provided new political momentum and, together with the upcoming G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, it will hopefully enable us to conclude the deal in 2010.

We are calling for real engagement with key World Trade Organisation partners in the months ahead in order to move the negotiations forward on the basis of the package which has been tentatively negotiated up until this point. As Members know, we are pursuing a range of bilateral agreements in conjunction with this.

Georgios Papastamkos (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, under pressure from the economic crisis, many states are introducing measures to invigorate their domestic industries. The most recent example is the decision by US President Barack Obama to impose duties on tyre imports from China.

Has the Commission evaluated the impact on European exports of the policies of our third country trading partners, such as the 'Buy American' or 'Buy Chinese' campaigns?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission*. – I have indeed been discussing with the United States and with China – from which I came last week – 'Buy American' and 'Buy Chinese' – two very different programmes; at least that is what I am reliably informed. I have read the legislation for 'Buy American'. I am

concerned much more about the implementation by individual states in the United States than I am by what it actually said.

'Buy Chinese' is a different proposition. I am reassured to some extent by what both the Trade Minister, Chen Deming, and the Vice-Premier, Tang Jiaxuan, said to me last week about the objective and the way in which European businesses would be treated, but I remain vigilant to make sure that neither directly nor indirectly does European business suffer.

In terms of the current position on tyres, which I think the honourable Member is referring to, we are just watching that at the moment to see exactly what will happen. The honourable Member is right to point to it as an important area that we need to keep an eye on and see what happens and obviously I am happy to keep in touch on that.

President. – In the absence of Mr Moraes, I am afraid Question 27 falls.

Question No 28 by **Liam Aylward** (H-0279/09)

Subject: Marketing European beef and lamb products

What measures is the European Union pursuing to help market the sale of European beef and lamb products in third countries and does the Commission intend to bring forward any new initiatives to help in this process?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission.* – We work actively to tackle what are very complex vital sanitary barriers, and with this to help market the sale of European products like Irish beef and lamb. The Market Access Strategy, and particularly the Market Access Partnership launched in 2007, is the centrepiece of the Commission's work in that respect. The Market Access Strategy sets up a stronger partnership between the Commission, Member States and business to enhance the work of detecting, analysing, prioritising and removing barriers.

The specificity of this strategy is that it is done through the right mix of various trade policy instruments. That means using multilateral and bilateral channels and complementing the more formal medium to long-term policy instruments with political contacts and with joint trade diplomacy.

Our efforts in relation to this market access have been stepped up considerably in recent years, and we have several success stories to show we are going in the right direction. For example, we managed to confine a few countries and lift the ban on EU exports of meat due to the dioxin and PCBs contamination incident in Ireland in December 2008, and recently we were successful in opening Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Philippines to the import of EU beef and to treat certain SPS issues in a more trade-friendly manner with Egypt and Israel.

We keep insisting on the different levels with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Korea, to bring some of their legislation fully in line with the requirements of the SPS agreement and of the international standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health. We have asked EU beef businesses to come forward with their specific concerns and to make suggestions on how we might tackle barriers in key markets. It has recently had very positive feedback, and a presentation made by an Irish business association will help us in setting priorities and continuing our work.

Liam Aylward (ALDE). – Can I ask the Commissioner if she would consider a thorough and full examination of the food promotion budget? It has been in operation since the 1970s, is very restrictive and needs to be reformed. Furthermore, would the Commissioner agree that improving the competitiveness of the European Union food sector will help the European Union pull itself out of the economic recession?

Seán Kelly (PPE). – It is well known that European beef and lamb products comply with the highest standards. What measures is the Commission taking, if any, to encourage or demand that similar standards apply to trading partners, particularly in Brazil?

Catherine Ashton, *Member of the Commission.* – First of all, I am not familiar with the particular area that the honourable Member mentioned, so, if I may, I will come back to him in writing about that.

However, I agree completely on the question of the value and importance of the industry to the European Union and to trade. Indeed, it is an area where we have increasingly to look and focus. I work very closely with Commissioner Fischer Boel when looking at trade agreements to make sure that the agriculture side of our agreements represents a real strength and a real opportunity. I hope that, as our negotiations unfold, the honourable Member will see more of the value that we place on this.

In terms of the reciprocity principle, we are negotiating with and training third-country officials so that they understand what the EU system is, so as to build their confidence in the level of protection offered to EU consumers and to their consumers alike.

We insist that third countries respect their international obligations, notably the World Trade Organisation SPS agreement, making sure that, when setting requirements, they respect international standards or base their requirements on science.

Question No 29 by **Bernd Posselt** (H-0272/09)

Subject: Environmental damage caused by lignite mining in the Czech Republic and central Germany

What view does the Commission take of the environmental damage caused by opencast lignite mining and lignite-burning power stations in the Czech Republic and central Germany, and of the progress with plans to decommission lignite plants and return affected land to nature?

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – (EL) Mr President, the environmental damage which may be caused by the mining and use of lignite in power plants is an issue which is adequately addressed under Community legislation.

Under the Mining Waste Directive, units which process mining waste must have authorisation which includes a waste management plan and a plan for the closure and rehabilitation of facilities. These units have to provide a financial guarantee to cover the cost of rehabilitation of the land.

The directive makes provision for inspections to be carried out by the competent authorities and includes obligations relating to the prevention of air, water and land pollution. The directive has applied to new facilities since May 2008. Facilities which already existed must obtain authorisation, in accordance with the directive, by May 2012.

The Member States must also prepare a list of abandoned and decommissioned facilities which cause or may cause environmental damage by mid-2012.

The regulatory framework of the European Union also includes other directives, such as the IPPC Directive and the Large Combustion Plant Directive. As far as environmental liability is concerned, the Land Directive is before the Council, but has not progressed. Of these, the most important is, of course, the IPPC Directive, which requires large combustion plants to obtain an authorisation based on the application of best available practices.

At the same time, the Large Combustion Plant Directive sets minimum limit values on emissions for the most important atmospheric pollutants. If a plant ceases to operate, the IPPC requires the operator to take measures to prevent any risk of pollution and to take measures to rehabilitate the area.

This legal framework safeguards a high level of environmental protection in the event of possible environmental damage from lignite-fuelled plants.

Now, as far as the closure of plants is concerned, this will be judged depending on whether plants comply with statutory requirements.

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – (DE) Thank you for your accurate and comprehensive answer. However, I did also ask specifically about the border areas, in other words Germany and the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland, Poland and the Czech Republic. There are many of these cases in these areas. I would like to ask whether you believe that there is sufficient cross-border cooperation between the relevant states and whether the Commission is providing support for cross-border measures in these areas, in particular as part of the regional programmes.

Stavros Dimas, *Member of the Commission*. – (EL) Mr President, first there are various sources of financing, both for the Czech Republic post-2007 and for Germany. I must, of course, also remind you that, with the energy and climate package approved last December, there will be sufficient money from the scheme to trade greenhouse gas emissions which, under the agreement reached, must be reduced by 50% in order to combat climate change and other related uses.

This means that facilities, especially outdoor lignite mining facilities, by definition destroy the environment and nature with various problems caused not only to the natural state of the land, but also to water from other pollutants and, as we know, from the generation of large quantities of carbon dioxide, given that lignite

is, from this point of view, the worst fuel. On a scale from one to ten, it is perhaps one of the worst in terms of carbon dioxide emissions. I should like to say that money can also be obtained from emissions trading and, as far as Germany in particular is concerned, I have to say that emissions are being traded even as we speak. Consequently, there is also money from this source. However, apart from that, I should like to say that there is Community financing which can also contribute to the restoration of environmental damage from mining activities.

The regional operational programmes for the period 2000-2006 funded projects to regenerate areas which had been badly affected by the mining of brown coal in certain federal states in former East Germany, such as Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia. Provision is made for this type of support to continue in the relevant programming documents for the 2007-2013 period.

As far as the Czech Republic is concerned, the North-West regional operational programme for the period 2007-2013 finances actions to regenerate and rehabilitate abandoned mining areas. The 'Environment' operational programme also makes provision, as one of its priorities, for the regeneration of abandoned mining areas and, of course, cooperation not only between countries, but also between regional organisations, benefits both sides.

President. – Questions which have not been answered for lack of time will be answered in writing (see Annex).

That concludes Question Time.

13. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes

14. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 20.00)