

## WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

*President*

*(The formal sitting opened at 15.05)*

### **1. Formal sitting - 20th anniversary of the democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe**

**President.** – Before we begin, I should like to say that I have exchanged views with President Havel, and I can assure you that we could not have imagined something like this 25 years ago!

*(Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a formal, plenary sitting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe.

President Havel, President-in-Office of the Council, Prime Minister of Sweden, President of the Commission, fellow Members, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, today is a very special day, and we have as our guest in the European Parliament a man who has had a great effect on the history of Europe.

Two days ago, we watched the Wall fall for a second time in Berlin, this time, in the symbolic form of dominoes. Today, Parliament is playing host to a man who was one of those who, twenty years ago, set those dominoes falling – a writer, an intellectual and a wonderful human being. A friend to all those fighting for freedom and human rights wherever they do not exist – President Václav Havel. Dear Václav, welcome!

*(Applause)*

Let us not forget that communism was overthrown by ordinary people: Workers, academics writers; millions of people behind the Iron Curtain who never gave in to oppression. Their only weapons against the tanks were a strong heart and great determination. They took many risks during the decades of subjugation, but triumphed in the end, because people's dreams are stronger than concrete walls; than murderous political systems. However, an important role was also played by those who helped them from the other side of the Iron Curtain, letting those in the East know that they were not alone. It was thanks to all of those many people that the historic reconciliation between East and West, the reunification of Europe, was possible. Václav Havel was, and remains, a hero to them all.

In 1989, students in my country came out into the streets to call for Václav Havel's release. Václav Havel became the president of a free Czechoslovakia soon after; president of both Czechs and Slovaks and a hero to both.

Just as 20 years before that, in 1968, with the emergence of independence in Czechoslovakia, the common hero of the Slovaks and Czechs was the Slovak, Alexander Dubček.

Mr President, dear Václav, in 1987, an underground press printed two of your plays. The cover has lodged itself in my memory, with its sketch of a small, sad man, who looks bereft and poorly equipped for life. He is holding two fingers up in a victory sign. A small, insignificant man. This says loud and clear that every human being is born free and should be entitled to live a free life. That is the major challenge for our Parliament – a parliament representing free Europeans.

Please allow me to introduce a short presentation. It is a film, which will remind us what was happening in Europe 20 years ago and more.

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Ladies and gentlemen, we have before us Václav Havel.

He started writing at a very early age, and never stopped, not even during his four terms of imprisonment covering a total of five years. His writing has always been straightforward and honest, sensitive and beautiful.

Charter 77 was born as a means of cooperating between the Czechoslovakian and Polish opposition movements, and later those of other Eastern Bloc countries. Václav Havel was the main driving force behind the movement. He pursued the truth with courage and great modesty, just like Zbigniew Herbert, a poet who opposed the regime and who wrote: 'We had a shred of the necessary courage, but fundamentally it was a matter of taste.'

I congratulate you, Václav, on never having lacked good taste!

Ladies and gentlemen, President Václav Havel.

(Applause)

**Václav Havel**, *former President of the Czech Republic*. – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for the invitation and for the opportunity to address you during the days marking the twentieth anniversary of the dramatic breaching of the sealed borders, the cutting of the barbed wire and the tearing down of the walls between European nations and, in the case of Germany, the wall that divided one and the same nation. It was the end of the bipolar division, not only of Europe but, to a considerable extent, of the whole world. It was a moment of such historical importance that many people felt that from then onwards, the world could only prosper.

It did not happen. History, of course, did not end. It is all the more important to embrace this anniversary not only as an appeal to reflect on the present but, first and foremost, as an appeal to think about the future. I would like to contribute to this appeal with five comments on the theme of European unification.

None of us were fully prepared for the surprisingly rapid fall of the Iron Curtain, nor could we have been. It would have been unnatural. A period of specific dilemmas, examinations of various alternatives and uncertainty therefore followed. Finally, NATO took the courageous step of allowing in new members, thereby guaranteeing their security and enabling them to concentrate on preparing for accession to the European Union. After that, the Union genuinely opened its doors to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. From time to time, there are various difficulties with these countries. That is quite understandable. A democratic political culture cannot be created or revived on a day to day basis. It takes time and there are a host of unexpected problems that need resolving along the way. It was in the modern historical period that Communism held sway for the first and hopefully last time, and we were therefore the first to encounter the phenomenon of post-communism. We had to deal with the consequences of a protracted regime of fear and all the risks connected with a historically unprecedented redistribution of assets. There have been, and there still are, many obstacles and our experience with this state of affairs is still in its infancy.

Nonetheless, I believe that the West did the right thing. Every other alternative would have entailed many more problems and would have been even more costly, not only for the West but, in fact, for all of us. Not only might we have seen the dangerous development of a new struggle over spheres of influence or the direct domination of one side by another, but also the states locked out by the West would, in all likelihood, have become a playground for various nationalists and populists and their armed militias and possibly even a region of dangerous local conflicts, all the more dangerous for the fact that, for reasons that are well-known, the Second World War was not followed by a genuine peace conference that might have established European post-war relations in a binding, exact and lasting manner. In my opinion, many of those that waved flags bearing the hammer and sickle until recently would be very quick to take up a national flag. We saw what that leads to in the former Yugoslavia. It is a well known fact, of course, that demons always awaken further demons. No one can say, therefore, whether the contagion would have jumped across to the western part of Europe. We are living in an era when – thanks to globalisation – any local conflict can easily grow into a world conflict.

The chosen approach was therefore the most natural in historical terms and the most expedient in practical terms. It was, moreover, an approach that could be interpreted as an expression of shared responsibility for historical developments, the beginnings of which lay partly in the short-sighted policy of appeasement pursued by the democratic world.

I would like to summarise by saying that the considerable difficulties the EU has with us today are worth shouldering because any of the alternative courses of action would clearly have been much worse and much more dangerous. In these circumstances, all that we can ask from Europe is patience and understanding.

What we can offer to Europe is the question, of course. I have long believed, after what we endured in the era of totalitarianism, that we should have – for we are directly guilty – explained the experience convincingly to others, transforming everything that emerged from it into concrete initiatives. That is no easy matter and

I am not sure we have achieved it yet. Totalitarian or authoritarian forms of government often have very unobtrusive beginnings and very refined methods of social control. Only now, with the passage of time, do many of us realise how cleverly we were sometimes drawn into the webs of totalitarianism. All of this makes us particularly wary. That should be our contribution towards a guarantee that what we experienced can never happen again.

What is required? First and foremost, clear and explicit solidarity with everyone who is confronting totalitarian or authoritarian regimes today, wherever they are in the world. The solidarity in question should not be impeded by any economic or other special interests. Even small, inconspicuous and well-intentioned compromises can – albeit indirectly and with some delay – lead to fateful consequences. Evil cannot be appeased, as it is in the nature of evil to exploit every appeasement for its own ends. Besides, Europe has its own unhappy experience of political appeasement. Our support can be of more help than we might imagine to liberal-minded people or outspoken witnesses of the conditions in North Korea, Burma, Iran, Tibet, Belarus, Cuba or wherever else. We will also be helping ourselves. We will be helping ourselves to build a better world and to treat each other in a better way, in other words, to be truer to the actual content of the values we subscribe to at a communal level.

The European Parliament recently awarded the Sakharov Prize to Memorial, a Russian organisation monitoring respect for human rights in Russia. I believe this was an important act. I remember the significance it had in my own country when, against the wishes of the government, the French President once invited us – the opposition – for a working breakfast during a state visit. These things are only seemingly superficial. Under totalitarian rule, it is simply a fact that one breakfast or one suppressed student demonstration can, in the right circumstances, set history in motion.

The identity of every human being, except for what is innate to us as unique individuals, is created by the multiple levels of what might be described as our collective identity. Every one of us, to a greater or lesser extent, creates his own sense of belonging to family, community, region, firm, church, society or political party, to the nation, to the civilised world and, ultimately, to the population of this planet. All of this shows that we have certain types of home, whether geographical, ideological, linguistic, ethnic or otherwise, and we ourselves jointly create these homes. Our various kinds of patriotism, our aims, affinities, inclinations, pride, characteristics, traditions, customs, habits, and peculiarities also play a part in this. The world, in short, is a patchwork, humanity is a patchwork and each one of us is a patchwork.

Collective sovereignty naturally arises from this sense of collective belonging. We have a certain measure of sovereignty on all of the levels of our identity, but on none of them do we have, or could we have, full sovereignty. There is one requirement: for these sovereignties to complement each other and, if possible, not to contradict each other.

I am sure you have guessed that I am raising this matter now because the debates on the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty largely centre on the question of what sort of relationship there should be between national sovereignty and European sovereignty. The answer is clear: they should complement each other. If I feel myself to be a European, it does not mean that I cease to be a Czech. In fact, the opposite is the case: as a Czech, I am also a European. I like to say, somewhat poetically, that Europe is the homeland of our homelands.

At the same time, I am sure that European sovereignty will gradually strengthen in the future. I do not know how quickly or how slowly and I do not know what twists and turns there will be on the way, but I do know that the integration process must continue. It is, after all, in the essential and even the existential interest not only of Europeans but of everyone. The reasons for this are clear: we are living in the space of a single global civilisation in which the owner of a Greenland fishing company may live in Taiwan and also own part of a bank in Brazil or the owner of a Czech mine may manage his company by computer from Iceland. In such a space, various supra-national, supra-state or continental communities will play an ever more significant role. It is not, nor will it be, the end of the nation state, but nation states are grouping together and they will continue to group together and act together in many areas. Technical and economic developments alone make this an absolute necessity. On the other hand, at a time when the world is tending towards an ominous form of unification, the constitutions of the various smaller communities of states and nations that are close to each other in one way or another can be instrumental in providing better protection to national or regional identity.

The gradual and peaceful grouping together of states will also strengthen peaceful coexistence of course. Or have most of the wars of the last centuries not been wars of nation states? How better to tame the various nationalist demons than through practical cooperation between nations? Acceding to the principle of

multi-layered sovereignty will, of course, only be possible against a background of civilian and political support. I have noticed that in my own country – and possibly in many other countries – people often speak in terms of ‘us’ – in my case the Czechs – and ‘them’, by which people mean that bunch of wicked foreigners in Brussels. Are we not in Brussels too, however? This division into an *a priori* virtuous ‘us’ and a somehow wicked ‘them’ who seek to harm us at any price simply indicates what little understanding there is of the actual principle of integration. This, too, has to be patiently confronted.

We are all in the same boat and the boat is heading in the right direction. It will continue heading in the right direction provided that all of the passengers have a sense of shared responsibility and do not just play their own games for their own ends. We do not establish importance or uniqueness in a newly-created community by shouting about our vaguely defined national interests, which simply masks a lack of inner confidence, but through purposeful ways of getting along together and participating in the common effort.

For centuries, Europe has been the main centre of civilisation on this planet and has definitely regarded itself as such, even if it was wrong to do so. It therefore felt justified in exporting its culture, its religion and its inventions throughout the world, regardless of whether anyone cared to have them. The exporting of these values was often accompanied by violence. It might even be said that all of modern civilisation – not just the elements which the world considers outstanding, but also the short-sightedness of today – can be traced back to Europe. Europe should learn from all of this and resume its role in a new way. That is to say, it will no longer force anything on the world, but will seek only to inspire. It will just offer an example, from which others may take something without having to do so.

It would be difficult to find a region of the Earth in which so many nationalities or ethnic groups were concentrated in various countries, so many minorities and minorities within minorities. In recent decades, Europe has nonetheless managed to create what is perhaps the most consistent supra-national grouping to be found anywhere in the world today. Most importantly, however, the grouping did not emerge as the product of violence perpetrated against the weak by the strong as was always the case in the past. On the contrary, it emerged as the product of practical agreements. Integration has therefore relocated from the battlefield to the conference hall. If nothing else, this alone can now serve as a major challenge to the rest of the world.

I mentioned the increasing importance of supra-national structures in today’s world. In my opinion, the best political arrangement for the forthcoming decades would be a form of creative partnership-based cooperation between these large supra-national or continental entities, based on specific minimum social standards, which should be moral rather than political. If they are to make sense, of course, these relationships must be based on two fundamental principles: complete mutual equality and as much openness as possible. A relationship is not a partnership when, for practical reasons such as fear of oil or gas supplies being cut, someone fits blinkers to their eyes and forgets all about murders of liberal-minded journalists or similar evils that he would be glad to speak about under other circumstances. A relationship such as that is based on falsehood. Genuine partners must be able to talk to each other about everything they are thinking, in other words, the whole truth, and they must also be able to listen to the whole truth.

European integration, thanks to which the greater part of our continent has lived in peace for so long, is, in effect, a unique attempt at a democratic confederation of states. It is not, nor will it immediately become, a fully-fledged federation or even a traditional confederation. It is simply something new. If only this attempt could be an example to others! However, that is not the main point. It is my belief that the European Union has an opportunity to inspire the rest of the world with something still more profound than its model of cooperation between nations. By this I mean an opportunity to try and make amends for all of the questionable ways in which Europe has determined or influenced the entire character of contemporary civilisation. It is a movement that is perhaps slowly getting under way already.

I have in mind here the rejection of the cult of profit at any price, regardless of the long-term and irreversible consequences, the rejection of the cult of quantitative growth and ever-increasing growth, the rejection of the crude ideal of catching up with and overtaking America or China or whoever else, and the rejection of a dangerous and unplanned colonisation of the Earth and the mindless looting of the planet with no regard for the environment or the interests of future generations. I also have in mind smart energy saving whereby the success of a state is measured not by the growth of consumption but, on the contrary, by the reduction of consumption.

Of course, all of this is possible only on the assumption that a change will begin to take place in the soul of the contemporary European. He should be – confronted with the latest discoveries of cosmology – just a little more humble, he should think about what will happen when he dies and he should bow down in solitude

before the mystery of the universe; in brief, he should once again relate more to eternity and the infinite, just as he did in the early stages of European development. We should reflect seriously on the fact that nothing that has been done cannot be undone, that everything is somewhere remembered – even if only in the form of flying light – and that nothing is therefore forgiven forever.

To return, however, to Europe as a partner to others, it is the case that most of the wars in the history of the human family have been about borders, in other words, territory. From this comes the important lesson that not only nation states but also supra-national communities should always know exactly where they begin and where they end. Indistinct or disputed boundaries are a frequent source of disaster. The European Union should remember this too and be clear as to its external boundaries. If it wants to tear down a boundary, it must first know where the boundary lies. It would thus endorse the idea of geographical self-identification on a broader, which is to say planetary, scale. In this way, too, it could make a significant and concrete contribution to what we all long for, which is peace between the peoples and nations of this planet.

The theme of shared sovereignty arises in European debates mostly in relation to the institutional arrangements of the Union. I applaud the Union for devoting so much energy to this theme in recent years and for the successes it has achieved. It is precisely for this reason that I venture to gaze further into the future over this matter. The parliament in which you are sitting is directly elected and an effort is made for the numbers of representatives from the various states to correspond to their size. In my opinion, the European Parliament, as the only body directly elected by all Europeans, should have rather more power than is actually the case today. The job of legislating should accordingly shift more explicitly from the executive to the lawmaking authority. The European Parliament must not appear to anyone to be merely an expensive adornment of the Union.

In my view, another smaller body might eventually come into being alongside the Parliament and the members of this body would be elected by the national parliaments from their own ranks, with all Member States having the same number of members. In this way, or another similar way, it would be possible to resolve two issues at the same time. Firstly, it would eliminate the feeling which arises in various national parliaments of being excluded from European decision making. Secondly, it would ensure that there was at least one Union body here guaranteeing absolute equality to all member countries. Such a body would meet only rarely, of course, when a certain number of members requested it, and only in relation to issues requiring consensus. This solution would also mean that appointments to the Commission would not have to be made in such a complex way in accordance with the nationality key and the European Council would not have to have such complex vote-counting arrangements. I admit that I personally think it is more important to have commissioners who are genuinely the leading professionals in their field rather than to have my own fellow nationals or even fellow party members at any price.

The European Council currently comprises an odd combination of executive and representative authority. Even its position needs to be clarified. I believe that it should be something akin to the position of a Head of State in a parliamentary democracy, comprising therefore a sort of partly obscure and partly visible collective head of the confederation of states, the visible representative of which, intelligible to all, would be an individual, of course, that is to say a president, whose existence is already envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty and who is a very important figure, bearing in mind that wherever some form of collective head of state appears, it usually presages the break-up of the state. I am not saying that this may also happen in the case of a supra-national community, but nonetheless I do feel that there should be a single human face somewhere at the top which would represent the entire complicated machinery and thanks to which all of it would be better understood.

I have already said many times that I would consider it excellent if, sometime in the future, there could be a slim, intelligible and readable European Constitution which could be understood even by schoolchildren and if all the rest – now running to thousands of pages – could be mere appendices to this. The Charter of Fundamental Rights, as the text which formulates the values or ideals on which the Union is based, which it strives to conform to and which it bears in mind when taking decisions, would naturally form an organic component or actual first section of such a Constitution.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make a final comment which will, to some extent, bring me back to the point I started from. Viewed from afar, the European Union looks like a highly technocratic body, concerned only with economics and money. The eternal haggling over the budget, quotas, customs duty, taxes, business regulations and various other regulations are perhaps necessary and I do not condemn them in any way. I even think that the famous recommendations or standards on how to cook goulash – a common target for eurosceptic ridicule – are intended more as a protection of something Czech or Hungarian rather than as an attack on the Member State concerned and its identity.

Nonetheless, however, I think that the Union should still place greater and more visible emphasis on what are actually the most important things, that is to say, its spiritual and value-related foundations. The Union represents an unprecedented attempt to construct a large and original supra-national community on the basis of respect for human freedoms and human dignity, on a foundation of genuine and not merely apparent or formal democracy and on a belief in common sense, decency and an ability for equal dialogue within the community and with anyone else. It is also based, of course, on respect for individual nations, their traditions, achievements, the territories they occupy, their homes and the landscapes in which these homes are located. And also, of course, on respect for human rights and human solidarity.

Europe's rich spiritual and cultural history – founded on a combination of classical, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and later Renaissance and Enlightenment elements, has created a body of incontestable values, to which the European Union may have given its verbal endorsement, but which it often conceives of only as an attractive wrapping for the things that really matter. Is it not these values, however, which do matter first and foremost and is it not, on the contrary, these values which give direction to everything else?

I am not advocating anything revolutionary, epoch-making or radical here. I am merely advocating a more profound reflection on the actual basis of European unification, a more emphatic cultivation of our Europeanness and an articulate reference to a moral code which extends beyond the world of our immediate benefits, a world which leads nowhere and which uses only quantitative indicators to determine prosperity.

It is twenty years since Europe's rift was healed. I firmly believe that the continent will never again allow itself to be divided and that, on the contrary, it will be both a space and a source of ever deeper solidarity and cooperation. If only Schiller's Ode to Joy could become for us and for our descendants more than just a poem celebrating friendship between peoples, expanding instead into an evocative symbol of our common efforts towards a more humane world.

*(Standing ovation)*

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, if the Sakharov Prize had existed thirty years ago, you would have been the leading candidate for us, Václav. Fortunately, you no longer need this prize today, since we no longer have an old and a new Europe. There is only one Europe. Today it is our duty, as politicians, to respect the values of reconciliation and solidarity on which the Union has grown. Let us therefore do everything possible to ensure that they are not forgotten.

Thank you very much once again, President Havel. Thank you Prime Minister, Minister, President-in-Office of the Council, President Barroso and Commissioner, for being with us.

Václav, your visit to the European Parliament is very important for us. Our doors are always open to our European heroes. Thank you very much for coming. We will remember your address. All the best to you.

*(Loud and sustained applause)*

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

*(The sitting was opened at 15.50)*

## 2. Resumption of the session

**President.** – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on Thursday, 22 October 2009.

## 3. Tribute

**President.** – It is with great sadness that I have learnt of the death on 17 October of our former fellow Member, Lady Diana Elles. Lady Elles was a Member of the European Parliament from 1973 to 1989 and performed the roles of Vice-President of the European Parliament from 1982 to 1987 and of Chairman of the Committee on Legal Affairs. Please rise and observe a minute's silence in memory of our late colleague.

*(The House rose and observed a minute's silence)*

4. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes
5. Requests for the defence of parliamentary immunity: see Minutes
6. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes
7. Oral questions and written declarations (submission): see Minutes
8. Texts of agreements forwarded by the Council: see Minutes
9. Action taken on Parliament's positions and resolutions: see Minutes
10. Transfers of appropriations: see Minutes
11. Documents received: see Minutes
12. Order of business

**President.** – The final version of the draft agenda as drawn up by the Conference of Presidents at its meeting of Thursday, 22 October 2009 pursuant to Rule 137 of the Rules of Procedure has been distributed. The following proposed amendment has been tabled with the agreement of the political groups:

*Wednesday:*

The title of the Commission statement on the political situation in Honduras with a view to the elections on 29 November 2009 will be amended as follows: 'Commission statement – Political situation in Honduras'.

**Ioannis Kasoulides**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – Mr President, the PPE Group does not agree with the change to the name that was on the agenda regarding Honduras, and disagrees with the suggestion that the title referring to the 29 November elections be deleted. The date of the elections is an extremely important part of the whole debate, and we consider that it should remain as it was.

**Ulrike Lunacek**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I would like to speak in favour of retaining the new proposal, because, at the end of the day, it is clear that the negotiations in Honduras have failed. There is no joint proposal for this election. The election is illegitimate, because the incumbent president came to power as a result of a *coup d'état*. I therefore urge this House to agree to the suggestion from the Bureau to remove the elections.

**Alojz Peterle.** – (SL) I am very much in favour of keeping the agenda unchanged. I was a member of the delegation of the European People's Party that travelled to Honduras and had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the situation there. There is no truth in the idea that the 29 November elections are taking place because of the events in June. The elections were called six months prior to those events and have no particular connection to subsequent political developments, nor could those developments have contributed to the emergence of any new candidates. I also think that the 29 November elections are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Everything suggests that we should keep the agenda as it is and that we should support the democratic development of this country in the future.

**Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, I would like to raise a point of order: I do not have my voting card with me because it was not planned that there would be a vote now, and so I ask you to note my wish to vote in favour of the order of business remaining unchanged. On this occasion, a machine cannot replace me.

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, I would say to all of you who have the same problem: thank you, but please do not take the floor. We can record the wishes of each one of you, but those wishes cannot be taken into account for the purposes of the vote or of the vote count. They are only taken into account in the minutes but not for the purposes of the vote count. I am sorry but you should always carry your voting paper with you because the vote can take place at any time.

*(Parliament rejected the proposal)*

*(The order of business was thus established)<sup>(1)</sup>*

*(The sitting was suspended at 16.05 and resumed at 16.15)*

**IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK**

*President*

### **13. Outcome of the European Council on 29 and 30 October 2009 including the mandate and attributions of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for the foreign and security policy/Vice-president of the Commission, as well as the structure of the new Commission (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the European Council report and Commission statement on the outcome of the European Council on 29 and 30 October 2009 including the mandate and attributions of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for foreign and security policy/Vice-President of the Commission, as well as the structure of the new Commission.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt, President-in-Office of the Council.** – Mr President, it is my pleasure to be back here again and to report to you on the results of what proved to be a very complicated and challenging European Council meeting.

Let me explain the situation on the eve of the European Council. We were in constant contact with Prague and other capitals. How would we solve the Czech request regarding the Charter of Fundamental Rights? There were many different views, and there were calls for various exemptions and special considerations from several other Member States.

In contrast, we got a clearer message on climate change – the other main subject for the meeting. The message from a number of Member States was that they were not ready to commit to figures on climate financing, i.e. how to finance adaptation and mitigation efforts in developing countries.

Given these circumstances, I am satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. Let me point out the highlights.

Our objective at the European Council was – as December's Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen approaches – to continue to lead the way on climate change. Let there be no illusions. The negotiations were both lengthy and difficult, but in the end, our discussions led to an endorsement by the European Council of the Commission's estimate of EUR 100 billion annually by 2020, and it estimated that the level of international public support should lie in the range of EUR 22 billion to EUR 50 billion by the same year.

The year 2020 is only 10 years away. We need to act quicker than that, and so the Council noted that, in addition to this, we need global financing of EUR 5 billion each year from 2010 to 2012.

A final figure will be determined in the light of the Copenhagen conference. The EU and the Member States are ready to contribute their fair share, if other key players make comparable efforts. I am very pleased that at this European Council, we were able to reach agreement on a strong mandate on this.

A few days ago, I returned from talks with Prime Minister Singh at the EU-India Summit in New Delhi, and earlier last week, I held talks with President Obama at the EU-US Summit in Washington.

Thanks to the agreement at the European Council, the EU was able to negotiate from a very strong position. Our unity gave us the credibility to encourage others. We were able to present our commitments. We were able to express our expectations. And we were once again able to lead the way on an issue that is crucial to all citizens.

Last week's meeting was also about the economic and financial situation. Although there are signs of improvement in the world economy, the European Council stressed that there is no room for complacency. Next year, all but one of the Member States risk exceeding the 3% deficit ceiling, and our collective GDP has shrunk by 4.7% since the beginning of 2008. Both of these are strong reasons why we should not withdraw

<sup>(1)</sup> For additional amendments to the order of business: see Minutes



supporting measures until we have secured our recovery. In the meantime, we need to reinforce confidence and continue work on our exit strategies.

At the European Council, we made significant progress on strengthening financial supervision. We reached broad agreement on the establishment of a European Systemic Risk Board.

The Presidency will now begin to discuss the proposals with this Parliament. We want to reach agreement on a package for a new supervisory structure. We want to make sure that we do not suffer a repeat of the financial crisis we have just experienced.

With all this in place and on its way, we must focus on safeguarding jobs. Over five million Europeans have already lost their jobs, and far too many will still face unemployment. It is up to us to change this trend.

When I presented the priorities of the Swedish Presidency to you on 15 July, I said that the EU must emerge strengthened from the crisis. I told you that handling the economic and financial crisis was one of our most important tasks. It still is. For this reason, we intend to return to these important issues at the European Council meeting in December.

Another important outcome of this meeting was the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – a strategy that is based on an initiative from this Parliament. Our ambition with the strategy is to address the urgent environmental challenges related to the Baltic Sea, and to contribute to the economic success of the region. I am convinced that this initiative will also have a positive effect on other parts of Europe, pulling regions together and making a positive contribution to the competitiveness of the EU as a whole.

We also discussed justice and home affairs. We welcomed the progress made in implementing measures concerning illegal migration in the Mediterranean, and we called for work in a number of specific areas.

I know that you also want to discuss institutional matters this afternoon. They were, of course, an important element of the discussions.

Indeed, one of the key issues was to ensure the rapid entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which is crucial if we want to be able to confront the challenges that lie ahead together.

The consultations were many and they were very complicated, but in the end, we managed to gain acceptance for the request made by the Czech Republic.

With this agreement in place, President Václav Klaus was prepared to sign the treaty, and – as you all noted – he finally did so a week ago. The final instrument of ratification is now being deposited by the Czech Republic with the Italian authorities. This means that the Lisbon Treaty will enter into force on 1 December. I know that the vast majority of you here today share my satisfaction and relief that finally, this long chapter of preparations for institutional reform is coming to an end.

The European Council also assessed other treaty preparations. It agreed on guidelines for the European External Action Service and it invited the future High Representative to present a proposal for the organisation and running of the Service.

Now to the question of names. We need to fill the positions created by the Lisbon Treaty. We need, together with you, to appoint a new Commission. I plan to convene a meeting of Heads of States or Government on 19 November in order to nominate the President of the European Council, the High Representative and the Secretary-General of the Council.

Let me stress that the nomination of the High Representative will have to take place before the new Commission is appointed, and that this should be preceded by appropriate contacts with this Parliament. As you know, since this person will also be Vice-President of the next Commission, he or she will also be subject to the Parliament's vote of approval.

I will not speculate on who these persons will be, but I would like to say that it is not just the name that is important, but also what they will be doing and how they will do it.

Last week's European Council enabled us to make significant progress, not just on one key issue, but on several issues that are vital for the future of Europe and vital for the future of our planet.

I am grateful to my colleagues for their constructive attitude towards the challenges we face together. Nevertheless, you and I know that much remains to be done. I can promise you that the coming weeks will

be very busy. I look forward to continuing our close cooperation with this Parliament on many of the important issues.

The Copenhagen meeting is actually now only 25 days away. The economic crisis is far from over, but we have a solid mandate going into the climate negotiations. We are determined to continue to work together to generate new sources of growth and higher employment.

I am grateful for the continuing support from this Parliament. I look forward to responding to your comments.

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, let me complement Prime Minister Reinfeldt's assessment of the European Council by commenting on two aspects, one on policy and one on institutional issues.

As regards policy, the key deliverable was the very important agreement on our action on climate change. We all know these are difficult issues. When there is so much at stake, the road will never be easy. Frankly, the European Council result exceeded my initial expectations. We got the approval of the numbers the Commission proposed, accompanied by strong conditionality.

The message is clear: the European Union is ready for Copenhagen and ready to follow our action to cut emissions with a powerful offer on climate finance, just as the Commission proposed in September, both in the longer term and in 'fast start' funding.

If we want developing countries to come to the table with serious commitments on mitigation, then we need developed countries to put money on the table. Our assessment is that by 2020, developing countries will need around an additional EUR 100 billion a year to tackle climate change and this was fully backed by the European Council, as is the likely share of public international finance in that figure, and agreement that the European Union will pay its fair share.

It is equally clear: other partners must show that they can match the seriousness of our intent. Our policy is not about the European Union forging ahead in the vague hope that others will follow. It is about using our leverage to bring about the maximum possible in terms of a global effort to cut emissions.

When I was in Washington and New Delhi last week, I was reminded just how far these two partners have come in the past year or so. The same is true of others, like China. Of course, we will continue to respect the important requirement of common but differential responsibility for climate change but, as I have said many times recently, we are all in this together, and we in the European Union will continue to push for real contributions from all the other players. We need to keep focused on the end goal – ambitious, serious, verifiable cuts in emissions to ensure that we keep within our target of limiting temperature increase to less than 2 °C.

So what are the prospects for Copenhagen? It now seems to be likely that Copenhagen will not see agreement to the fully-fledged treaty that we have pushed for and will continue to push for. But that is not a reason to accept anything less than a decisive breakthrough in these negotiations. In the end, it is content that matters more than form. In my view, we should try to arrive at a fully operational agreement, based on real political commitments, that comes rapidly into force, and which brings all the major players on board for both emission reductions and finance. And we should continue to fight on for final agreement to a treaty – a binding treaty. To make that happen, we need to join all our forces in the weeks remaining to Copenhagen.

We have just shown that we can, by decisive joint action, agree on a treaty that has proven elusive for a very long time. That was the other major result of the European Council: it lifted the last political hurdle to the final ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Now we can look forward with confidence because, as Prime Minister Reinfeldt said, the Lisbon Treaty will be in place at the start of next month. In fact, the Commission is working on its implementation. Today, the Commission has launched a consultation on the Citizens' Initiative as a first, concrete step.

I would like to pay tribute to Prime Minister Reinfeldt for his sure touch in bringing this ship into port. The Swedish Presidency has done very remarkable work in bringing this final consensus to the European Council. But now we have to complete the task of transition. The focus is, of course, very much on the filling of the new posts.

It is not for me to comment on the candidates for the Presidency of the European Council but, as Commission President and looking at the institutional matters, I very much hope that Heads of State or Government will select the personality that can provide effective leadership to the European Council – a President with a strong

European commitment that can give consistency over time to European Council activity, both internally, so that priorities can be set over a longer timeframe and not just for six months, and externally, so that on common foreign and security policy, we send coherent messages to our international partners.

I am committed to working in tandem with this President of the European Council because that partnership will make all the difference. We need to pull together at the level of Heads of State or Government the common foreign and security policy on which the President of the European Council will represent the European Union at this level. We also have to put together all Community competences – from the economy to trade, from enlargement to development, from energy to justice – where the European Commission President represents the European Union according to the treaty. I am committed to making this partnership work in the interests of a strong and effective European Union at home and globally.

That is obviously also true for the High Representative. Here, I confess to a particular interest because that High Representative will also be one of the European Commission Vice-Presidents. On a very pragmatic level, because the nomination of the Vice-President/High Representative, and the other proposals by Member States for the Commission, will allow me to pass to the phase of finalising the next College and attributing portfolios. On a political level, because I am convinced that this High Representative/Vice-President, supported by a strong External Action Service bringing together European expertise in intergovernmental diplomacy with our Community competences, can mean a real step change in the effectiveness of our external action.

This brings me to the Commission as a whole. I want a Commission composed of competent and committed Europeans, a Commission that is ready to take all its right of initiative. I am working in my final discussions with Member States to ensure that this is the case. I have asked Member States to come forward with names, including women. Then it will be for me to decide on portfolios. Portfolios are not attributed to countries but to persons that are committed to our European project.

I also want to have a Commission with a strong democratic mandate. That is why I am determined to give full respect to the hearings process in this Parliament. The delays due to the treaty have given us a common challenge. We must not delay the arrival of a new Commission, but we cannot short-cut the hearings. I look forward to discussing how to handle this issue in the Conference of Presidents next week.

The Lisbon Treaty will enable us to deliver better on citizens' expectations – but whether we use the opportunities it offers will be, first and foremost, a matter of political will. The treaty gives us the capacity to act but we need the willingness to act together.

That brings me back to the beginning of our afternoon. The Europe represented here today – a Europe united in freedom and solidarity – would not have been possible without the commitment and the dedication of people who made extraordinary things happen 20 years ago. We need to rekindle this flame. We need to have the spirit of 1989. If we show the same dedication and commitment, I am sure we will succeed.

**Joseph Daul**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Treaty of Lisbon has been ratified by the 27 Member States of Europe and has an obligation to produce results.

It has an obligation to produce results with regard to the institutions and, in particular, to the swift creation of positions of responsibility. It has an obligation to produce results with regard to climate change and energy. And, last but not least, it has an obligation to produce results with regard to the economic recovery.

With the signature of the Czech President, the process of ratifying the Treaty of Lisbon has finally come to an end. My thanks to Mr Reinfeldt.

The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), which has very much left its mark on this treaty, is naturally satisfied with this development, but it is now time to stop monopolising the European public debate on the institutions, which are merely a tool with which to serve political ambitions, and to focus on those ambitions instead.

That is why my group is asking you, Mr Reinfeldt, to do everything it takes to obtain an agreement as quickly as possible on the names of the Council President and the High Representative, and that is why my group is asking you, Mr Barroso, once the Member States have nominated their candidates, to divide up their responsibilities as quickly as possible before they are questioned by the European Parliament in hearings, which we also want to be as in-depth as possible.

I will not be telling you anything new, Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso, when I say that the debate on the profile of these candidates is of interest only to the Brussels microcosm.

Once again, what do our fellow citizens want? They want their unemployment, credit and training problems to be solved; they want some pleasant surprises to come out of the Copenhagen Summit on climate change; and they want us to ensure that the winter of 2009-2010 is not marked by gas shortages that put half of the continent in an impossible situation.

Therefore we, the European institutions, here as I speak, and especially you, Mr Reinfeldt, have a duty to get the Europe train moving at high speed, not have it continue to stop at every station!

Everyone knows, in this House, the difficulties involved in the task, the difficult balance that you have to find between the political tendency, geographical origin, concern for equality and receptiveness of the candidates. However, it is your duty to finalise an agreement at the Council as quickly as possible, just as it is the duty of Parliament and of the parliamentary groups to give their verdict on these decisions responsibly and in accordance with the European general interest. Once again, I hope that this will be one of the success stories of the Swedish Presidency, but for this to be the case, we must act fast, very fast.

Presidents, ladies and gentlemen, even more urgent than the matter of the institutions is that of climate change, with the Copenhagen Summit being just a few weeks away. I want above all to commend the responsible attitude of the European Council which, at the same time as reaffirming its commitment to make the fight against climate change and the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> a quantified and planned objective, expects our partners to commit themselves with the same determination.

It would be by far the wrong tactic for Europe to lay all its cards on the table before Copenhagen and to let its US, Chinese, Indian and other partners call the shots. The United States, China and India are today global powers that must also assume their responsibilities. Europe is assuming its responsibilities, but it cannot do this for the planet by itself. A political agreement will not suffice in Copenhagen. What counts are the quantified commitments made by the states.

Ladies and gentlemen, I began by talking about the obligation to produce results. This obligation concerns, first and foremost, the economic recovery and employment. The two are linked. Even if we are starting to see signs of small-scale growth returning, it is all about knowing whether the economic recovery will be accompanied by jobs, and if that recovery is built on solid foundations and, in particular, on a market that is at the same time open, regulated and non-protectionist.

Those are the real concerns of Europeans, and this must be the number one concern of Europe and of its Member States, beyond the day-to-day administration problems. As we have seen today, 20 years ago it was determined men who succeeded in bringing down the Wall. I ask the same of you, Mr Reinfeldt: shake up the Heads of State or Government!

**Hannes Swoboda, on behalf of the S&D Group.** – (DE) Mr President, Mr President-in-Office of the Council, Mr Barroso, perhaps it is a coincidence – although a happy coincidence – that this debate is being held immediately after the speech by Václav Havel, a man who has reminded us how important this process was twenty years ago. I was born just a few kilometres west of the Iron Curtain, but it could just as easily have been the other way round. At that time, I was in the Soviet occupation zone and I saw the Hungarian refugees of 1956, the refugees from the Prague Spring in 1968, such as my fellow Member, Libor Rouček. I see in the Treaty of Lisbon an extension of this process that is bringing Europe together.

It was probably not the intention of Václav Klaus to complete the ratification in precisely the month in which we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it is a happy coincidence that this treaty attains *de facto* validity right now, even if it does not quite yet have legal validity.

We now need to take decisions with regard to people. I do not envy you this task, Mr Reinfeldt. However, I do have a request or a question for you: are you prepared, in your talks with the Heads of State or Government in the next few days, to ensure that in this Europe, we also attain something close to a geographical balance that is representative of the new Europe? Are you also prepared to ensure a stronger representation of women, perhaps? I am not just saying this on account of Mrs Malmström and Mrs Wallström, who are sitting here. Can Europe today afford to have top positions – and I am speaking to my own group too – in which so few women are represented? Is that the image that represents Europe to its people today? The President of Parliament has already mentioned this. You are not, of course, to blame if this does not happen, but I ask you, at least during the talks, to point out that we need a better geographical and, above all, a better gender balance in Europe in order to show that we represent the whole of the European population.

You mentioned the High Representative. Are you prepared, Mr Reinfeldt, to also ensure that it is made clear that, when you nominate a High Representative, he or she will not assume full duties until ratification has taken place or there is a decision of this Parliament? I know that there will, of course, be a gap in time, but it must be clear that, in his or her joint role as Vice-President of the Commission, the High Representative requires approval by Parliament. We will need to be very careful and conscientious in giving that approval. We need to make it clear that, particularly in this area, we will perform our duty and, Mr Barroso – I believe we can promise you this – although we want to carry out these hearings properly and carefully, we also want to reach our decisions as quickly as possible, as the citizens of Europe demand that we work and come to decisions quickly rather than spending months discussing various people.

The last point that I want to touch on is the financial crisis, which you have mentioned, because that is also something that causes us great concern. You rightly mentioned unemployment, which is also set to rise further. You also said that we cannot withdraw the support measures while we still have unemployment on this scale, as the citizens also expect us not to accept as high a rate of unemployment as we have now in this new Europe.

There is also the debate about the financial transactions tax. I know that it has already been assigned to others five times, but it is probably also an important debate to show that we are serious about the control but not because we now want high tax burdens. However, we need to make it clear that we want to use all of the instruments to help to stem speculation and that, above all and in order to prevent a new crisis, resources are available to help those banks that, in spite of this, still get into difficulty. We need to send out clear signals in this regard.

The head of Goldman Sachs recently said – and we need to let these words sink in slowly – ‘I am just a banker doing God’s work’. That is surely a particularly cynical and perhaps blasphemous statement, but it shows the sort of mentality that many of these people have. They are speculating in the name of God, to put it bluntly. We do not want to claim that it is God’s work that we are doing with our financial regulation, but rather it is work for the people, to protect the people of this continent from unemployment and speculation, and that is what we need to do. I hope that you will still be able to send out clear signals along these lines throughout the remainder of the Swedish Presidency.

**Guy Verhofstadt, on behalf of the ALDE Group.** – (FR) Mr President, I would like to begin by congratulating Mr Reinfeldt, and Mrs Malmström too, of course, on the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. It should be stressed that it is thanks to your determination that this was made possible; it is thanks to your sense of compromise that we finally achieved it. For there were many pessimists, including in this Chamber, who thought that we had to wait for the UK elections, or even stop waiting for the ratification of this treaty altogether. It is therefore thanks to you, and I thank you on behalf of everyone for the work that has been done. This means that almost 10 years of work are thus being crowned with success.

I also wish to thank you for today’s debate, for having agreed to a debate with the group chairmen on the profiles of the High Representative and the President of the Council and on the structure of the Commission, because this will be the only debate on this issue. Nothing else is really being done transparently, I must say! We read many things in the press, and it is a good job that we still have the press to learn a little of what is going on, but I believe that, in future, we will have to think about how we can bring some transparency to a process that is extremely important for the European Union.

I am going to give my opinion on the various nominations, addressing the different points in a slightly different order.

I am going to start, Mr Barroso, with the structure of the Commission, because that is the most important thing as far as Parliament is concerned. It is our responsibility, well, it is your responsibility, but it is in association with you that we must take decisions. It is we who supervise, whereas that is not the case with the President of the Council.

What we are asking you to do for the first time, in your proposals, is to use clusters when dividing up the responsibilities. What we are proposing is that you in fact create four clusters, or groups, of Commission portfolios: external action, obviously, then innovation, climate change and sustainability, followed by everything to do with financial and economic justice, and, lastly, internal affairs.

This is absolutely necessary. Why not install vice-presidents who would really take the lead, who would take responsibility for each of these groupings, which seem to result from the common sense shown within the Commission? This style of organisation would have the advantage of further improving the Commission’s

work under your presidency. On the other hand, there also has to be a balance as regards female representation within the Commission. I believe that it is also a concern of yours to have candidates who offer this possibility.

With regard to the second point, Mr President, namely the post of High Representative, the most important thing is that we have someone who has the will to conduct a consistent CFSP policy and consistent Community policies, someone who also defends human rights and who makes this a part of every task that he or she carries out. And, finally, we must have someone who believes in a powerful European External Action Service. Those are the three key elements that characterise this figure. We need someone who really believes that CFSP and Community policies must be integrated – which makes perfect sense, given that that person will also be Vice-President of the Commission.

I now come of course to the third nomination, the one most spoken about, the one that is, let us say, the most attractive of all, namely the President of the Council. Mr Reinfeldt, my group has three opinions to voice on this issue. They are simply opinions, since it is the Council that will decide. Fortunately, however, Parliament can give opinions and can do so openly.

Firstly, this role must be that of a chairman, rather than a president, to use those two English words. Next, it must be performed by someone who believes in European integration. After all, to be elected Pope, one has to be a Catholic! Thus, if we now elect a President of the Council, we have to choose someone who believes in European integration, not a sceptic, as is sometimes the case ...

Finally, in order to be sure of the person's firm belief in European integration, he or she has to believe in the Community method. It is the Community method that drives Europe forward, not governmentalism! Governmentalism is a concept of large countries, even though there are, fortunately, large countries that do not believe in this intergovernmental method. It is the Community method that the President of the Council must defend.

I have one last point to make by way of conclusion, Mr President: I naturally call for Mr Reinfeldt to find a consensus within the Council, and for the pro-European coalition that exists within this Parliament to be reflected in the nominations and the division of the various roles. Therefore, what we want is indeed a compromise, but one that also reflects the composition of this pro-European alliance that drives Europe forward within this European Parliament.

**Rebecca Harms**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Reinfeldt, Mr Barroso, I believe that it is precisely the recollection of the historic events of 20 years ago that has now allowed us to see the wrangling over how to implement the options after ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is a critical light. Václav Havel's splendid words and his ideas about Europe, on the one hand, and the petty disputes over staffing that went on in the background during the last Council, on the other, do not go together, somehow.

In my view, it looks, at the moment, like the relief over the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon after almost ten years is giving way to concern about whether or not it will all be undermined in the governments of the Member States. However, what we actually need to strive for – particularly given how strongly we applauded Mr Havel's speech – and what we actually need to achieve is to agree that we need strong men and women to be appointed to the top political positions in the European Union and that individual interests, including the interests of the countries that are actually opposed to stronger integration, should take a step back.

Mr Reinfeldt, I am not yet able to congratulate you, because, as yet, there is no convincing sign of these strong men and women at the head of European politics.

The huge praise that various speakers have expressed for what we have achieved in the run up to Copenhagen is also something that I, unfortunately, cannot go along with. I have just returned from the last United Nations preparatory conference in Barcelona and, as confirmed in the summit here in Brussels, we are going to Copenhagen with ever decreasing expectations.

It is wrong that Europeans have now adopted the stance that we have actually already done everything we can and now it is up to everyone else. If we look at what the Europeans have actually already done in terms of an efficient climate policy for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, what has actually been achieved, the reduction targets we have set, the legislation in our climate package, none of that is sufficient to achieve the two-degree target that is constantly talked about. Everyone knows that, even at an international level.

If the Europeans now start to question whether we really want a legally binding agreement, it will call into question a process that, under the aegis of the United Nations, has been supported by many Europeans for many years. I think you need to think carefully about the announcements you make as you go to Copenhagen.

There is always one concern at the back of my mind: it is frequently said in this House that sustainability strategies, resource efficiency and climate protection should be the new paradigms for European economic and industrial policy. Mr Havel also received a great deal of applause for this. I have the impression that Europeans – as often as they emphasise this and as much as they like to applaud it – have lost all faith in these future-oriented jobs during the economic crisis and that, therefore, precisely during this economic crisis, they are casting aside the successful strategies for creating new jobs and the markets of the future. This causes me serious concern. The economic crisis is the worst justification for not taking ambitious measures to protect the climate. Climate protection and economic development are actually two sides of the same coin. However, that is not at all evident in the European decisions being taken in the European Council.

**Timothy Kirkhope**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, may I first congratulate the Swedish Presidency on progress at the recent summit in developing the European Union's position on climate change. Tackling climate change is one of our highest priorities and is the kind of issue where we expect and want the European Union to take a strong lead. The balanced and measured agreement on financing arrangements is very welcome and places the Union in a strong position as we work towards Copenhagen.

But I must mention the debate that now seems to dominate Europe's agenda: the appointments of the President of the European Council and the High Representative. We should start by defining clearly their scope and nature, and then we should establish the qualities and experience of the people needed to fill them. Surely it is logical for the European Council to invite formal nominations and to hear candidates, perhaps including Mr Verhofstadt, ahead of the decision.

Instead, the discussion is degenerating into a shabby debate between government leaders who appear only to be interested in sharing out jobs amongst themselves, be it from small or large countries, north, south, east, west, Left or Right, and not whether someone is actually the best candidate to take the responsibilities.

What is worse, some have even tried to divide the European Union into two classes of citizenship by saying that only individuals coming from a Member State in the Schengen area and in the euro area should be eligible. That, I am afraid, is discrimination which is unacceptable, and this on a day of history when we remember all those who have fallen in warfare and in a week when we have remembered the horrors of Kristallnacht and the tragic events which followed, and where we have celebrated the achievement of all those who contributed to the fall of Communism, in Poland, where it began, in Hungary, in the Baltic States, in countries throughout Eastern and Central Europe and, of course, ultimately in Berlin.

It is right to fight for freedom and values for all, not big jobs for the lucky few.

**Lothar Bisky**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, the Treaty of Lisbon has been ratified by all 27 Member States. Many will be celebrating this as a great success, but my group will not be joining in these celebrations. I have stated the reasons for this many times in this House and I do not intend to do so again.

Unfortunately, the fact that the Charter of Fundamental Rights will not apply for the citizens of three Member States gives me doubts about the EU's great progress in the protection of fundamental rights. I mention this specifically in view of our celebratory sitting today and Václav Havel's speech. However, precisely because the Left in Europe wants a social, peaceful and environmentally sustainable European integration, we will also continue to use the framework provided by the treaty for this purpose. We have done this up to now, and we will continue to do so.

In this connection, I can only welcome the fact that the European Parliament will now have more rights. Amidst all the rejoicing, the Heads of State or Government would also have been well advised to use their recent summit for more tangible policies. The greatest challenge facing the world is climate change. In the run-up to the world climate conference in Copenhagen, the European Union has, unfortunately, lost the leading role that it had set itself. For one thing, the substance of the commitments to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions does not correspond to what is actually needed. Moreover, it is unacceptable that the EU Member States quite clearly want to avoid their financial responsibilities, even though this is a situation where we cannot afford to delay our action.

It is not about whether Sweden will soon become a great wine-growing region – although I do not begrudge you that. It is quite simply about survival and, incidentally, also about peace in our world. Climate change is already causing poverty and hunger and forcing millions of people to flee from their homelands. Everyone in this Chamber has surely spoken at one time or another of global challenges that cannot be overcome at national level. Climate protection, peace and combating poverty are just such challenges. If the European

Union does not act in a consistent and exemplary manner in this regard, it will lose its acceptance as an international player.

**William (The Earl of) Dartmouth**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, the new post of President of Council, with which everyone seems to be fairly obsessed, is an appointment for two and a half years only and has very few defined powers. So somebody should tell Tony Blair not to get too upset if he does not get it!

After Lisbon, the true Holy Roman Emperor of the 21st century – the Charlemagne of our times – whose writ extends farther than that emperor's ever did, is, of course, the President of the Commission, our very own Senhor Barroso. And I say this despite Senhor Barroso's comments on partnership.

However, it is rather different for the new High Representative. There is a big budget to open new diplomatic missions, and I must point out that the existence of the post of EU High Representative threatens the permanent seats on the UN Security Council held by the United Kingdom and France, too, Monsieur Daul.

However, the big problem facing the nation states of Europe is not too few diplomatic missions but too many unemployed. Members here have celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – and rightly so. But now we have a new Berlin Wall, not on the frontiers of nations but within nations. This wall is between the professional politicians of the political establishment and the people.

It is a bit too late to be asking for transparency now, Mr Verhofstadt. There are those of us here who will continue to speak for the people and to speak out against these institutions which, as the EFD Group has said before on several occasions and will do so again, are short of democratic legitimacy.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI)**. – *(DE)* Mr President, democracy needs a revolution, and it is never wrong, Mr Dartmouth, to speak out in favour of transparency, Mr Verhofstadt. You in particular, in the Swedish Presidency, could be a shining example of this and actually tell us what is going on in the horse trading for the top posts that is completely unworthy of the European Project and also – Mr Barroso could lead the way on this – with regard to the appointment of the commissioners. Germany and Austria are a poor example in this regard, but so, unfortunately, are others.

There are qualified people sitting in this Chamber, but they have no chance of being accepted. Please, now that the Treaty of Lisbon has been adopted, be courageous and honest and admit that we need much clearer, transparent decision-making structures for the Commission and for the top posts. With so much expertise, it has to be possible to find good people in the European Parliament rather than gathering them from some province or other.

**Fredrik Reinfeldt**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, I thank the honourable Members very much for their many valuable comments and questions.

As someone stated, it has taken quite a while to get 27 Member States to ratify. We have been discussing this treaty for many years, and I am always surprised to find that I then get questions on how quickly we can stop living after that constitution, because I must base my work on the treaties. It has been defined there that the decisive bodies for the Council President are the Prime Ministers and Heads of State of Europe. That is actually what has been put into the treaties.

Added to that, a problem which is obvious to me is that most of the people that are mentioned are current Prime Ministers of different European countries. It is actually a tense matter to portray oneself as a candidate for a job you might not get, sending a signal to the people that you are leaving the country and then coming home again and saying, 'Well, I am still here!' I think we should respect that this is a factor when it comes to this issue.

On the High Representative, you will have much more transparency, much more discussion, because that will be part of the Commission, part of a decision taken after hearings inside Parliament. Although, to answer Mr Swoboda, it is clear in the treaty coming into force on 1 December that the High Representative goes directly into his or her new job, but has to be part of the Commission approved by Parliament.

This is, of course, complicated but, just to state the obvious as I said the last time, it was never meant to be the way it has now turned out. This was supposed to already be in place before the Swedish Presidency. It is a much lengthier process than anyone could foresee.



On the issue of balancing, because this is something that I also hear, I have just today had the first round of consultations with my 26 colleagues. The problem is that it is a lot of balancing for only two persons. You mentioned geography and gender, but the number one balancing that I am listening to is between Centre-Left and Centre-Right. There is a lot of balancing to do, and I would have liked more positions to be able to satisfy all the criteria that have been mentioned here. To say the obvious, it is not that we are not trying to find the best possible balance.

As I said, this will be next Thursday at our summit meeting with an early dinner to meet all your requests for as quick a process as possible. That is what we have been trying to do. There were comments on who is taking this decision. It takes a little while just to consult everyone. We are now EU-27. Full consultation with my colleagues involves two days' work – this is fantastic, but it takes time.

On climate, I agree with Rebecca Harms that Europe is not doing enough. I also want to remind you that we have foreseen a situation where we need to increase our efforts in Europe within legally binding targets, but there is a need for conditionality. This reflects the views of many of my colleagues. They are very precise that, if we should go even further in Europe, we also need the same kind of commitments from other parts of the world.

I welcome country- or nation-based decisions which have gone further. We have many examples of that. My country for instance, Sweden, has taken a national target of a 40% reduction until 2020, and this is true for Germany as well.

We need to do more – and we are not the ones asking to dilute the decision we need to take in Copenhagen – but a lot of work needs to be done to get others to move. As I said, I am back from my travels to India and the United States, and am going to China later in this month, and we need leadership agreement to get this going. That is the tough thing with this. It is a global challenge in a world where we do not have the kind of global leadership or decision taking that we have in the European Union. It is therefore much tougher to deliver but, at the same time, we need to do it.

The European Union, as you know, only accounts for 13% of global emissions. We cannot solve this on our own: we also need commitment from others, especially the major emitters, and they are the ones who seem to be raising their hands and saying we want to be outside of the agreement. That is not possible, as we could never then deliver on the 2 °C target.

Finally, during the Swedish Presidency, we will now try to push through the better supervision of the financial market that is needed to get better functioning financial markets for the future.

We will also start discussions that will continue into the Spanish Presidency on competitiveness, on how to get better functioning labour markets, and on how to get out of the crisis once we see clear signs of recovery. This, then, is a balance between learning from the problems we had and creating better-functioning financial markets, but also the discussions and the decisions needed to get better competitiveness and better-functioning labour markets here in Europe.

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to comment briefly on some of the issues that were directly put during the debate.

First of all, regarding climate change, let us be clear. The European Union is committed to a binding treaty. We have been committed to the Kyoto Protocol and have ratified it. All of our Member States have ratified Kyoto, and we are in favour of a binding treaty for the future. If there is anyone who does not want a binding treaty, it is not the European Union.

But the reality is that some of our most important partners are simply not ready for it, so there are two possibilities. One is to insist on something that we know is not going to work, another is to try to have the most advanced and ambitious outcome at Copenhagen. I believe it is still possible, and we will fight for it. To have the most ambitious possible agreement at Copenhagen and – at least for the European Commission, and I am sure the Heads of State or Government agree – we will remain committed to a binding treaty that sets clear targets for the developed countries and clear actions for the developing countries, including the fast-growing, big emerging economies that also have a responsibility to share. We also need to provide funding to the developing countries – especially the poorest and the least developed countries – because we know very well that, without that support, they will not be able to make the adaptation and mitigation efforts that are needed.

(FR) With regard to the institutional question, let us be totally honest with ourselves. We are now on the eve of the entry into force of a new system that is extremely demanding.

Most of us have fought hard to have this treaty, over many years, at least nine years! After Nice, we wanted a more ambitious treaty, and now we must implement it. It is complex, because our Union is complex – it is a Union of Member States, a Union of citizens.

The most important thing, however, is precisely respect for the treaties. We are a Community based on the rule of law, and the day that we fail to honour our commitment to show full respect for the treaty will definitely be the day that we fail in our duties.

That is why it is crucial in this transition – and when the new treaty is implemented – that respect be shown for the treaties and for the powers of each institution: the powers of Parliament, of course, the powers of the Council, and the powers of the Commission.

I myself am one of those who believe that Europe stands still when one institution uses its power and its authority against the others. I believe that it is a mistake to act in that way. I believe that institutional jealousy is a characteristic shared by mediocre individuals. On the contrary, I believe that we will be stronger if we strengthen one another. I believe that it is entirely in our interests to have a strong European Parliament – and the Treaty of Lisbon gives it increased powers – but also to have a European Council with a consistent and coherent leadership over time, and a strong Commission.

Moreover, in accordance with the treaties, and I cite the Treaty of Lisbon – because we talk about it all the time, but we need to read it sometimes too – Article 17 of which states that it is the Commission that ‘shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end. It shall ensure the application of the treaties, and of measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them.’ In other words, it is the Commission’s job to verify whether or not the treaties have been applied, including during this transition. This is a power that the treaty gives to the Commission and which the Commission will, of course, exercise within the scope of its responsibilities.

That being said, it is important to work on a partnership basis in order to strengthen the European institutions. If we do not have institutions that work, what will happen? The Member States – especially some Member States – will tend to take their own decisions outside of the institutions. Is that what we want? I do not think so. We want decisions to be taken within the institutional framework, within the framework of a Community based on the rule of law, and this is what I would like to say to you very frankly and very sincerely: let us mutually strengthen our institutions.

We have heard today the extraordinary plea made by Václav Havel. It is extraordinary, but as Jean Monnet said, nothing is possible without men; nothing is lasting without institutions. We now need to put in place strong institutions, and that can only be done in this spirit of partnership. That is why, among other things, I wish to thank you for your suggestions concerning the organisation and structure of the Commission. Like you, I am very attached to the Community method and to the treaty, which provides for a clear division of responsibilities. Under the treaty, the responsibility for the organisation of the Commission falls to its President, and I have no intention of renouncing it.

Therefore, when I present the Commission, I will do what all modest authors do: I will thank all those who advised me, while assuming full responsibility for the final product. Today, I have heard some good and interesting suggestions, but the crucial point to understand is this: each of us must exercise his or her responsibilities coherently with the other institutions, while showing, of course, the greatest possible consideration for the European general interest.

**Íñigo Méndez de Vigo (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, the President of the European Commission was saying that he congratulated Mr Reinfeldt on having brought the ship safely to harbour, the ship in question being the Treaty of Lisbon.

Two years ago, in this House, I was saying that I was afraid that the Treaty of Lisbon might end up like the fish in *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway’s novella, which, after a long battle, arrived at the harbour almost as a pile of bones. Well, I can see that the Treaty of Lisbon has not arrived at harbour as a pile of bones, but that its essence is still there. Thank you, Mr Reinfeldt; thank you, Cecilia.

I must say, however, that I believe that what you have done, in seeking the agreement with the President of the Czech Republic, is right. Many of us in this House were troubled by the behaviour of the President of the Czech Republic, but there is a Spanish poet who says: ‘after everything, everything has been nothing’; in the

end, the important thing is that the treaty is in force and that now we are thinking about the implementation of the treaty.

Mr Barroso, it is not my intention either to give you any advice on how you ought to form your Commission, partly because I respect the autonomy and independence of the President of the Commission, who has received a substantial vote asking him to do this. When you present your college of Commissioners and the division of responsibilities, we will tell you whether we are for or against, but today, you have our full support.

Neither do I intend to give any advice, clearly, to the President-in-Office of the Council, but, if you will permit me, I would like to point out to you something that happened during the work done on the constitutional treaty. In the first draft, which created the post of the President of the Council, there was a proposal that this Council President should be a prime minister who had been in office for at least two and a half years (as a joke, Mr Reinfeldt, we called it the 'Bruton clause', after John Bruton, because John told us that he had been prime minister for two years and seven months, and therefore would be eligible for the post). However, we later removed this condition – Mr Duff remembers – and we removed it because in this Parliament, we were asked what there was in the DNA of a prime minister that was not possessed by other mortals' DNA. Why must the President of the Council be a prime minister?

Mr Reinfeldt, you should rather seek out the person who can best represent moral authority, who can be the broker of agreements in Europe. In order to do this, we have given you a tool, Mr Reinfeldt: it is the fact that the election of this President of the Council does not have to be unanimous, but may be by qualified majority.

Therefore, consensus is desirable, if it is possible; if not, use the qualified majority to seek out the best President of the Council.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR PITTELLA

*Vice-President*

**Marita Ulvskog (S&D).** – (SV) Mr President, I am pleased that the Swedish Presidency has abandoned its desire to push for quick moves to exit strategies, which would risk making the high rates of unemployment a permanent problem in Europe. However, I am concerned that more and more people are warning that the climate summit in Copenhagen will not be the success that so many have hoped for, and this has been reflected in many of the speeches in this debate and the questions put to Mr Reinfeldt.

This pessimism is also evident in the conclusions from the last Council meeting. Admittedly, the Council confirms that the developed world must reduce its emissions by 80-95% by 2050, but if we are to succeed in doing this, ambitious commitments are needed in the very near future and, to achieve this, we must resolve the issue of the financing of the measures in the developing countries. It is those countries that have contributed least to climate change that will be affected most by it and if we do not resolve the issue of financing, we will not get a climate agreement either.

What promises is the Council making, then? Just as Mr Reinfeldt said here today, the EU has promised to make a reasonable contribution. In my view, this is an anticlimax. Would it have been possible to decide that the EU would not make a reasonable contribution? In my opinion, it is like starting to knit a glove and not getting any further than the thumb. The Commission has proposed aid in the region of EUR 5-7 billion during the first three years. The Council is choosing to take account of this and I find it very difficult to see it as a commitment of any value.

I think this is worrying. Certainly, there are problems with the US and China and with other countries' ambitions, but there are even greater problems with the EU's position and our own ambitions. It should be possible to put this right, and if Mr Reinfeldt had seen fit to remain here, I would have liked to have asked him how the Swedish Presidency intends to acquire a stronger mandate ahead of the Copenhagen Summit, because this must not come to nothing.

**Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE).** – (DE) Mr President, the Treaty of Lisbon, which, fortunately, has entered into force, will give us more democracy and a hearing procedure for the High Representative. All of the commissioners come here, first so that we can listen to what they have to say and then so that we can subject them to scrutiny, and rightly so. However, the President of the Council does not undergo a hearing here, nor is he subject to scrutiny by us or by any national parliament.

His position is badly designed from a democratic point of view. He cannot be the political President of Europe, he has to be no more than an honest broker between the different interests of the Member States in the

Council, and the minimum requirement for his appointment is that there is a consensus in the Council. As Mr Verhofstadt has just said, when choosing a pope, we choose a Catholic, when choosing the President of the European Council, we choose a European, in other words, someone who believes in the European ideal. I think that is absolutely right. We need someone who can put the 'European' back into the European Council.

If this debate – requested by the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe – had not taken place in Parliament, we would all have only discussed this matter in the media or in the corridors. I believe that transparency is necessary for the forthcoming appointments.

To Mr Reinfeldt I would like to say:

This is not just about balancing Centre-Left and Centre-Right; this is about balancing the Centre, the Left and the Right.

**Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, climate change has already caused 300 000 deaths, and inaction, for us, is a crime against humanity.

We know that this is an emergency, we know that there is no plan B, and yet, today, the negotiations are at a standstill. It is easy to say that it is the United States' fault, but we believe that Europe is also hugely responsible.

Europe is unfortunately no longer, as the Prime Minister claims, the leader in the climate-change negotiations. Extending Europe's current commitments to the entire planet means having 4 degrees of global warming by the end of the century, 4 degrees of global warming! That is unacceptable, and it will no longer be enough, as President Barroso is also claiming, to hide behind the legislative character of this commitment alone.

Independent studies show today that Japan, Norway and Switzerland are ready to make greater efforts than Europe. With regard to the emerging countries – China, South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia – they too are making commitments domestically that go beyond what the scientific community is asking of them.

If there is one lesson to be learnt from Mr Havel's speech, it is how to be modest and how to be realistic. Let us stop pretending that everything stands still outside Europe, that the world has not changed since Kyoto, and that Europe is always far ahead of the international community. In refusing to take account of the requests of the European Parliament and, in particular, of its Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Council has assumed responsibility for something very serious: failure at the Copenhagen Summit.

It is not too late; Europe can resume its leadership by immediately increasing its reduction target to 30% and by granting at least EUR 30 billion in aid to the countries of the South. In so doing, we will lead the countries of the South and force an agreement out of the Americans.

**Konrad Szymański (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, the outcome of the Council in October is a good basis for placing restrictions on the completely unrealistic measures Europe is being expected to take in the area of climate change.

The action we take in the area of climate change should be made conditional on efforts made by China, America, India and Brazil. The contribution we pay towards clean technologies in developing countries must not ruin our own economy. Let us remember that it is, in fact, economic growth which gives us the opportunity to finance the technological changes which are of key importance for protection of the environment.

The breakdown of the contribution in the European Union itself must not give rise to a situation in which countries which use large amounts of carbon to generate energy pay twice for the same emissions – once under the emissions trading system, and a second time as part of the support for clean technologies around the world. If we do not take this point of view into consideration, we will weaken Europe's position in this debate.

**Mario Borghezio (EFD).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, a few days ago, a serious ruling by the Strasbourg Court created a very deep wound – on which the European Commission has expressed itself far too cautiously – by banning the Italian state from displaying crucifixes in classrooms. The issue is not so much one of religious principle as one of the principle of freedom: this was a grave violation of the principle of subsidiarity.

Now, if this is an indication of what is to come, there is reason to fear how this issue will pan out with the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon: are we sure that this dangerous path of having a European law that suppresses and rides roughshod over the Member States' laws will not be pursued? This is a danger that we must guard

against. The Commission should have reacted much more firmly, not least because of the unanimous protest – today there has been a cross-party meeting of the Italian political parties represented here – which represents the sentiment and the depth of feeling of our people towards this belonging, which is metapolitical, metareligious and cultural, in the sense of a great philosopher, who taught us with the important words, ‘we cannot say we are not Christians’.

The issue of the nominations is very important. Consequently, today, we are reading in press reports rumours of meetings; we do not even know whether there will have to be an extraordinary meeting in Brussels. I do wonder about something, however: studying the names that are circulating – for example, Jan Peter Balkenende, David Miliband and Herman Van Rompuy, to name but three – can it be possible that no one has noticed that all three regularly attend meetings of both the Bilderberg Group and the Trilateral Commission? I believe that we must establish principles of transparency, which are so often spoken about by our institutions, and we must ask these people clearly whether they are candidates representing their countries and their political parties, or representing secret groups that meet behind closed doors and take decisions over the heads of the peoples.

**Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI).** – (ES) Mr President, now that the worries generated by the approval of the Treaty of Lisbon have been overcome, it is time, in my view, to think about the way in which we should, in future, handle the nationalist attitudes that do so much to hinder European integration. My view is that these obstacles cannot be free of charge. With a cool head, it is time to think about the possible measures that will need to be taken in the days and years to come.

This simple MEP wants a President of the Council in the future who is a man, or, better, a woman who supports European federalism, uses the euro, is located in the Schengen area and identifies and agrees with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

## 14. Welcome

**President.** – I should like to inform you, ladies and gentlemen, of the presence in the official gallery of a delegation from the Senate of the Federation of Malaysia, to whom I extend a warm welcome. The delegation is led by His Excellency Datuk Wong Foon Meng, President of the Senate.

I would like to point out that the European Parliament and the Malaysian Parliament enjoy regular and fruitful contact. Malaysia has a vibrant society and a thriving economy, and it plays an important role within the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Therefore, I and the entire House have the pleasure once again of welcoming our friends and colleagues from the Senate: we hope that your visit will be very productive.

## 15. Outcome of the European Council on 29 and 30 October 2009 including the mandate and attributions of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for the foreign and security policy/Vice-president of the Commission, as well as the structure of the new Commission (continuation of debate)

**President.** – The next item is the continuation of the debate on the European Council report and on the Commission statement on the outcome of the European Council on 29 and 30 October 2009, including the mandate and attributions of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for foreign and security policy/Vice-President of the Commission, as well as the structure of the new Commission.

**Elmar Brok (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Commission, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, the speech by Mr Borghezio was typical – these eurosceptics cannot distinguish between the Council of Europe and the European Union – as the ruling on crucifixes was given by the European Court of Human Rights, which comes under the Council of Europe. This could not be done under the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

However, allow me to make a few comments on the current debate. I believe that the Swedish Presidency has brought the ratification process to a conclusion with great sensitivity and in a targeted manner, when, of course, this process still had to be completed by four countries within its period of office. I would like to express my gratitude for the fact that this process, which lasted nine years, has been steered home in this way. I believe that this will also give us the opportunity to put this into practice for the first time, because

what happens in practice also determines constitutional reality. For that reason, it must be clear that the President of the European Council has only the legitimacy of the Heads of State or Government, and in any constitution, any operational president who is not answerable to Parliament is directly elected by the people. That must be the case for the President of the European Council, too. Only the President of the Commission has full legitimacy.

I would also like to draw attention, as Mr Barroso also mentioned in quoting Jean Monnet, to just how important the institutions are for our lasting existence. As far as the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission is concerned, it must be clear that, when he takes office, he will immediately take on both roles. He cannot first take office as the High Representative on 1 December and then later as the Vice-President. He can only take office, as can the Vice-President, once he has been approved by the European Parliament. There should be no misunderstanding about this, because otherwise we will have legal problems.

I would also like to mention that the European Parliament will exercise its rights with regard to the External Action Service. We do not want the Treaty of Lisbon to be used to 'intergovernmentalise' Europe. That is not the spirit of the treaty. The External Action Service will play a decisive role in this regard. I would ask you to take seriously Parliament's position on this matter, which you are, of course, aware of, and not to make statements in this regard to the effect that we would destroy you because we have the power to do so.

**Adrian Severin (S&D).** – Mr President, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty is indeed an historical event. We should applaud it. We should be happy about it. We should congratulate ourselves and certainly we should congratulate the Swedish Presidency for the fact that they achieved this result.

A treaty, however, is not enough. Even the most perfect treaty could not, by itself, solve many of the problems. We need inspired and competent people to enhance it. In the case of the Lisbon Treaty, this is even more important since this treaty is the result of endless compromises, long discussions and long debates. Therefore, unavoidably, it has a lot of ambiguities and gaps.

It is for the future top decision makers to clarify things, to fine-tune the rules, to shape the institutions, to give the right interpretation to all provisions of the treaty and to detail the job description. The coming mandate, the coming legislature, will be crucial for the European Union architecture of the future. If we want this architecture to be viable, it must be a synthesis of all the historical experiences, cultural sensitivities and political traditions of all European regions and all European citizens.

Therefore, we need the team formed by the first three functions in the European Union – the President of the Council, the President of the Commission and the High Representative – to include all political sensitivities, all regions, and all geopolitical, cultural and geographical regions of Europe. I believe that this will be achieved and I believe that, if this is achieved, it will be good for the viability of the architecture and the effectiveness of the institution, but also for the credibility of the Union in the eyes of all our citizens.

**Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE).** – (FI) Mr President, permit me to thank the media for once. Without a free and vigilant media, the public would be completely unaware of the choice of EU leaders. Fortunately, however, we do have the media, which reports on the lobbying process and has presented the unlikely and likely candidates both for the post of EU President and High Representative. Even in this debate, in fact, there has been rather little talk of names, and only a few have been mentioned. All the same, we try to guide others outside the EU on the importance of democratic elections.

A while ago, I had an opportunity to visit Turkey, and when we were talking about the choices to be made in the wake of the Treaty of Lisbon, a member of the Turkish Parliament there asked when the choices would be made, and the European Union delegation replied that it had no idea who the candidates were or when the choice would be made, as everything was taking place behind closed doors. The EU has much scope for improvement here, to enable us to act more transparently in such matters.

**Ashley Fox (ECR).** – Mr President, I would like to comment on the informal discussions which we all know dominated the last European Council. I refer, of course, to the selection of the next President of the Council and the role he will take.

I believe that the President should be the servant of the Council – a chairman rather than a chief executive. It is therefore important that the President is both collegiate and someone the people trust, and, with that in mind, the worst possible candidate on both scores would be one Tony Blair. I share Chancellor Merkel's dread of having to listen to Mr Flash for the next five years as his motorcade sweeps around the world.

The issue of trust is also important and on too many occasions, Mr Blair has shown himself to be completely untrustworthy. He is unfit for public office and I urge the Council not to appoint him.

**Bastiaan Belder (EFD).** – (NL) Mr President, I read with great interest the Swedish Presidency's document on the European External Action Service. Yet my scepticism about this project is undiminished. At all events, I think it sensible of the Swedish Presidency to allow additional time for seeking the right candidates for the new posts, as the High Representative needs to be of the kind of outstanding calibre rare in Europe.

Mr President, I am still very concerned about the impact of these new posts on the interinstitutional balance. My fellow Members cannot fail to share my opinion. Unlike them, I am pleased that the external service is to remain outside the Commission. Foreign policy is primarily a task for the Member States and, should it be Europeanised all the same, I would prefer the climate of the Council to that of the Commission. This is exactly what is happening now, despite all our well-intentioned resolutions.

**Philip Claey's (NI).** – (NL) Mr President, this haggling about the appointment of the President of the European Council is far from edifying. For example, in Belgium, we are currently seeing the candidacy of our Prime Minister, Herman Van Rompuy, being supported with arguments along the lines of 'he is unobtrusive, he has relatively few enemies, he is good at reaching compromises'. The underlying reasoning is that anyone who can govern an artificial country such as Belgium can do likewise in Europe.

Yet it is not in the interests of anyone in Europe for the European Union to evolve into a larger version of Belgium. Besides, Herman Van Rompuy does not actually govern as prime minister. The Belgian model can no longer be governed, which means that Mr Van Rompuy is more a kind of caretaker of the status quo and, in effect, merely takes care of day-to-day business.

We do not need a colourless, flavourless, odourless figure who dances to the tune of the European Commission. What we need is a powerful mouthpiece for the Member States, and also for the citizens, who, unfortunately, are not taken into account in all this.

**Othmar Karas (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, twenty years ago, we peacefully ended the violent division of Europe into freedom and dictatorship. The European Union is the political project that made the reunification of our continent possible. The European Union is the political project that sets itself the goal of extending the zone of peace, freedom, democracy and stability in Europe. We are responsible for strengthening the community of values and the community based on law. We must do everything we can, starting right here and now, to ensure that the joy over what has been achieved will give us the strength and determination to make sure that no new walls or barbed-wire fences are constructed between the people of our continent and the rest of the world.

The Treaty of Lisbon is the greatest advance for democracy since the first direct election thirty years ago and it gives the European Union, the institutions, the opportunity and the ability to become the voice of the continent. However, we must seize this opportunity! We must have the political will to transpose and implement the treaty. If we have this political will, then it also means that we need to stop always looking only for the lowest common denominator. Any form of opt-out weakens the Community. We will only have put a stop to the crises once unemployment falls consistently and we once again have sustainable growth without having to inject billions that cause our public deficits to soar.

My last point is also clear: European thinking is about meeting each other half way and seeking out the best solutions. The discussions about appointments over the last few days lead me to fear that we are not looking for the best, European solutions, but for the easiest solutions for the Member States and the political parties. That is the wrong response to the developments of the last few years and to the Treaty of Lisbon.

**Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, I would like to make two comments, each regarding aspects of the conclusions of the European Council from the perspective of the chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and, therefore, involving the area of freedom, security and justice.

The first is on immigration: I welcome the fact that immigration occupied a significant place in the conclusions of the Council and I think it important that immigration policy is going to be, for the first time, a Community policy and that it is going to be the subject, during the Spanish Presidency, of an initial assessment that will involve the role of the European Parliament and of the national parliaments. At the same time, however, since there was a reference to solidarity in aspects of the management of immigrant movements, I regret the fact that this was not done under the binding solidarity clause, with its financial implications.

The second has to do with the institutional dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice, because this is going to entail a 'before' and an 'after' in the activities of this Parliament. Finally, there is to be a Community policy; at last, the European Parliament will be taking the decisions on it.

European citizens are entitled to hope for much from the conclusions of the European Council that will mark the end of the Swedish Presidency on 10 December, with the area of freedom, security and justice at last being enshrined as a major sphere of action that is genuinely European, and genuinely humanitarian, through the adoption of the Stockholm Programme, to which the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs is making a decisive contribution through the report that will be adopted this week.

**Andrew Duff (ALDE).** – Mr President, it is great that we can now close the final chapter on the saga of the treaty. However, I regret that we had to pay the price of extending to the Czechs the extremely poor precedent of the British protocol on the Charter.

The press is reporting the protocol as being an opt-out from the Charter. I would be grateful if the Presidency, in concluding the debate, could confirm that this is far from the position and that the Charter will still be binding upon the Czechs and their President sitting in his castle.

The import of the protocol is to constrain the practice of the courts in deploying the Charter during their domestic litigation, which is something far inferior and peripheral – and, at the end of the saga, negligible.

**Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, in spite of the grand declarations that the Lisbon Treaty would improve the function of the European Union, it turns out that it has opened a Pandora's box. Its provisions are not precise, and not only are they causing controversy, but they are already causing a division among the EU's leaders.

The treaty does not specify the prerogatives of the future President of the European Council, nor does it specify a democratic procedure for election to this position, and the President's real standing will be dependent on strength of personality and previously held function. It is also difficult to see whether the classic model of national presidencies, which set the tone of EU policy, will be retained. Things look similar with regard to the European Union Minister for foreign affairs.

The majority of Europe's citizens are waiting for an answer to the question as to whether we are moving towards the establishment of a strong European federal state at the cost of the sovereignty of nations and if, in the future, a strong Council President will not want to revert to the antidemocratic traditions of 20th century Europe.

**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, many thanks also to the Swedish Presidency for the crucial results obtained during this six-month period. At the same time, however, allow me to offer you – I am addressing the Swedish Presidency here – a gift: the gift is this blank sheet of paper, which you can use over the next few days as an extraordinary instrument for overcoming the difficulties that exist in identifying the candidates for the post of President of the European Council and of High Representative of the Union for foreign policy.

In fact, if you convince the Heads of State or Government to write on this sheet not the string of names appearing in the newspapers and on the television, but the idea that they have of European Union foreign policy, then we will have made a major step forward, because if they make it clear to us whether they believe, for example, in greater coordination, or in a genuine foreign policy, it will be easy then to put a face and a name to the person who will have to represent us in the world. This is the real transparency that we need: to understand what our idea of Europe and of European Union foreign policy is, what we are most attached to.

It is therefore crucial that the people chosen are those who embody the spirit and the values of the European project, someone who can guarantee Europe a leading role in international relations, who, to be effective, must reaffirm the ideals characteristic of its founding fathers, the only true unifying and thus explosive element on the world stage. The European Union is not a monolithic bloc but the product of the actions of men and women and, as such, it must keep up with the times to stay alive. Europe, in short, must start afresh on the basis of the values on which it was created, the fine results that we have achieved thus far, and, believe me, a good dose of realism too.

**David-Maria Sassoli (S&D).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I too wish to thank the Swedish Presidency for the work it has done and for having succeeded in putting in place the conditions for the final ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. We sorely need the new treaty because it offers us the possibility of



strengthening, of extending powers, for example, the powers of this Parliament, and of two new figures, who can represent political and institutional union. We therefore hope that the Council will be able to interpret the requests of the great European political families wisely, so that at the next meeting, an authoritative and strongly supported decision can be taken on the appointment of the persons called upon to occupy the new institutional positions envisaged by the treaty.

What do we need? We need a President of the Council who is capable of guaranteeing consistency and continuity. We need a High Representative who, on the strength of his or her experience and authority, is capable of guaranteeing Europe a leading role in a multipolar world, and who, at the same time, will act as a link between the intergovernmental and the Community dimension of the Union. And then we also need a college of commissioners that is strong, united and balanced in terms of politics, geography and gender. It is particularly significant that this is happening 20 years after the fall of the Wall, the wall that divided Europe, and all this can rekindle hope in a united, strong Europe that will continue to drive the demands for solidarity and justice.

**Louis Michel (ALDE).** – (FR) Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I should like to offer my thanks and congratulations to the Swedish Presidency for the truly remarkable work it is doing.

However, I should like to take advantage of this speech to address President Barroso through a third party: Mrs Malmström will therefore certainly pass on to him the comments that I have to make, following, moreover, his speech in response to Mr Verhofstadt.

We all want an effective and credible Commission, one that makes full use of its power of initiative and that is not scared to practise the Community method. However, if we want that Commission – and I understood that Mr Barroso wanted it too – then I believe that it must structure its action around competences organised within four or five pillars, each pillar being placed under the political responsibility of a vice-president invested with the authority and the ability – and with the power too – to ensure the consistency of the entire policy within his or her pillar.

The current division of the Commission's competences – and I am well placed to speak about this, since I was, after all, a commissioner for five years – undermines the Community method, handicaps the power of initiative and harms your institution. Please tell Mr Barroso this, on my behalf.

That it was difficult immediately to reorganise the structure of competences inherited from what were, at times, odd, if not opportunistic, arrangements of the past is understandable, but I would not understand it if the current president failed to establish the order that a new ambition for this institution deserves.

**Michel Barnier (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, thanks to the tenacity of the Swedish Presidency, which I too thank, we have the Treaty of Lisbon. However, a treaty such as this is not a project, but a tool, a toolbox to serve the European project, and it is therefore up to the men and women who manage the institutions – the Commission, its president, the Council – and to us here to make good use of these tools in the future, at the end of a transition period that has been long, too long.

For we are now better equipped to take up three major challenges in the face of which, ladies and gentlemen, we will together be playing not only for the credibility of the European Union, but also, to repeat the word used by Mr Havel just now, for its sovereignty.

The first challenge is that of the crisis, and we must not – we cannot – come out of it as we went into it, as if nothing had happened. There are lessons to be learnt in our dialogue with the United States, in particular, regarding governance, regarding solidarity, regarding transparency and regulation of the global economy, and for we Europeans there are lessons to be learnt as regards the safeguarding – I use that word deliberately – the consolidation of the internal market, in the 'reconciliation of the market and society', to repeat a word that I have adopted as my own, used by Mario Monti, to whom President Barroso has moreover usefully entrusted a task on this issue.

The second challenge is that of green growth. In Kyoto, we took the lead on this issue, thanks to the European Commission. We must maintain this position by ensuring, of course, that our partners, the other large countries, the large regions, adopt a reciprocal attitude.

And then, the third challenge is for us to be at the table, not 'behind the table', but 'at the table', of those who are going to decide on the world order – or disorder – over the next 20 years. This is not easy when we

number 27 nations, but it is crucial all the same, unless we do not mind – which I personally do – being subcontractors or being under the influence of the other countries.

This is why we have a great deal of confidence in the future work of the High Representative, whose job it will be to create a real common diplomatic and strategic culture. Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, the sooner we are ready, the better it will be for European citizens. That is why we eagerly and confidently await the decisions that you will take.

**Kinga Góncz (S&D).** – (HU) I would like to make an exception and not talk about the Treaty of Lisbon. Rather, I would like to say on the outcome of the European Council regarding the economic, financial and social chapter that we are, in one respect, delighted to see that the signs of financial stabilisation feature in this document too. This is how we see the situation ourselves, but in the meantime, it is also clear that people's reserves are dwindling in Europe.

Companies are finding it difficult to obtain financial assistance and bank loans, while unemployment is on the rise. This is also mentioned in this document. I think it is important to emphasise that economic growth cannot be sustainable nor can we talk about Europe emerging from the crisis stronger than it was until we can clearly guarantee that the current level of social cohesion is not only maintained but strengthened and until we can increase employment and prevent social exclusion.

The methods we have for coordinating social policy, based on an open approach, are fairly ineffective. We must improve our coordination methods. In fact, we need more effective tools. Social cohesion and the achievements of a social Europe are those factors which people consider the most important. It is our shared responsibility to highlight this fact.

**Lena Ek (ALDE).** – (SV) Mr President, politics and psychology go together and right now, many people are trying to talk down expectations ahead of the Kyoto negotiations in Copenhagen in a few weeks' time. Precisely the same thing happened when we negotiated the climate targets. The climate targets that we proposed and worked for in this Parliament had been declared dead and buried not once, but perhaps ten times, by the time we obtained the final decision.

It is exactly the same with the climate package. It has been declared dead and buried by those who, in fact, are opposed to the climate targets. I would therefore call on the Swedish Presidency to continue its good work in the negotiations and its constructive line, because if we do not aim for a fully binding agreement in Copenhagen, we will not achieve it. However, the two degree target is extremely important and therefore we must now push forward with full commitment. Seneca once observed that humanity can be divided into two groups: those who go on ahead and do something and those who walk behind and criticise.

**Marietta Giannakou (PPE).** – (EL) Mr President, I have noted exactly what the Presidency said about the economic crisis, but it is clear that, with the exception of one country, none of the others can apply the Stability Pact. Moreover, the economic crisis should not ultimately turn into a crisis of values and principles.

On the question of climate change, the Presidency did precisely the right thing. However, it needs to persuade not only the developing countries, but also the United States of America, if the situation is to change. It must take a real initiative in Copenhagen.

On the third issue, the Treaty of Lisbon, we are satisfied. Nine years after the crisis with the Treaty of Nice and the inability to find a response to the institutional question, we have before us a treaty about which several sides pestered us before signing. It is not only the institution and the treaty that are important. The people who apply it are also important and, in this sense, the Presidency is also responsible, at European Commission level, for ensuring that the people responsible – mainly the Minister of Foreign Affairs – express all the interests of a well constructed Union.

On the other hand, at Council level, and I refer in particular to the question of the President of the Council, this is a matter which many of us did not accept. As a member of the European Convention, I personally know that many of us would have preferred the position of President of the Council to be filled by the President of the Commission, which has also happened in the past because, in essence, the role of President of the Commission is to coordinate with the Council and to avoid disruptive clashes.

I trust that both the Presidency of the European Commission and, more importantly, the Presidency of the Council, will make appropriate recommendations to the Member States, so that the way in which both institutions operate is such that it does not differ from the Community *modus operandi* and the excellent past we have in Europe which has secured us so many years of prosperity.

**Ramón Jáuregui Atondo (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, I think that the agreement on the Czech problem was a reasonable solution; it was not perfect, but it was the best solution, and was necessary for such a serious problem.

I think that 2010 may be a great year for Europe. It has a new College of Commissioners, a new organisational structure guiding the European Union, and a new legal status: the European Union is now a single entity, called 'the European Union', with its own legal personality, and not a sum of different nations. Now we have, as has been said, the opportunity to act, and we need the will to act. I believe that Europe needs to overcome the very serious nationalistic tendencies that are preventing progress being made.

We ought to reflect on how much we would have advanced, ten years ago, towards the European Union with the euro if we had not given up the franc, the mark, the peseta, and so on. We need to recreate something of this approach within the European spirit, as Mr Barroso was saying.

I would like to mention two things that I consider to be essential. One is an urgent matter: the College of Commissioners must be approved in December in Strasbourg. I think that it is very important that the next Presidency, in January, should take up its mandate with this new path – with a new College of Commissioners – already in place at the end of this year.

Secondly, I want to reinstate the reason underlying the European Union – what the European Union is striving to achieve. I think that at the world's major forums of debate, very important decisions are at stake and that Europe must speak with a single voice, and with a strong voice, to advocate the special features of our project: a social model and a new legal, economic and political structure for a world in which the state plays a more significant role and in which there is a better market. Europe needs a louder voice that is more united and stronger.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE).** – (SV) Mr President, the Swedish Presidency is to be congratulated. That stubborn man in Prague has finally signed and we have now reached the end of the journey at last. Hopefully, it will not be institutional issues that take up our time over the next decade, even though Václav Havel, being a true European hero, was prepared to take further steps right away. The fact that the Czech Republic was granted exemption from the Charter of Fundamental Rights is disappointing, in my opinion. As Mr Duff pointed out, it is quite enough that Poland and the United Kingdom have opt-outs.

A global agreement must be reached in Copenhagen in which the wealthy nations of the world take a greater share of the responsibility. The poor nations of the world are not responsible for the warming of the planet. At the same time, of course, the growing economies must do their bit. Finally, Minister, the process ahead of the summit next week, when a president and a foreign minister are to be appointed, should have been carried out with greater transparency. The current secretiveness is embarrassing for a democratic Europe and I believe that I am not the only one to hold that opinion.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** – Mr President, I would like to make three observations. With the Lisbon Treaty in force, the EU needs, more than ever, efficient common foreign security and energy policies which are based on solidarity. Only such policies can prevent Schröder-Putin deals from ever being repeated.

Secondly, we need to realise how important it is in the new situation to have a continuously strong Commission that can take responsibility for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

Thirdly, regarding the new top posts, we first of all need courage to advance and to support not portfolios but personalities, personalities that have long-term vision and commitment to the continuity of European values.

So, in order to address enormous new challenges, the EU once again needs two European statesmen in the Adenauer, Schuman or De Gasperi mould. We should look for them without prejudice. These statesmen can also be found in the new Member States, which certainly should be represented in the future troika. Václav Havel told us today that Europe is a homeland of our homelands. Based upon this understanding, I think we can succeed in the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

**Sandra Kalniete (PPE).** – (LV) I would like to say what a pleasure it is that the Treaty of Lisbon is finally to enter into force, and to talk about who ought to be the President of Europe. Presiding over the European Council does not mean presiding in Europe, but rather being together with the European Union Member States, the Member States' leaders, and supporting and encouraging them to reinforce the European Union's role among tomorrow's leading global states. I would like to say that Mrs Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Latvia's former president, has all the personal leadership qualities and political leadership experience to make her a successful

president of the European Council. Her fate symbolises the history of our divided continent – a refugee after the Second World War, she returned to Latvia; as soon as our country was free again, she returned to become its president. During the eight years of her presidency, Latvia became a Member State of the European Union and of NATO. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga is a staunch European citizen. She is a highly educated and powerful figure who thoroughly understands the challenges of Europe's future. She will definitely also be able to take unpopular decisions, should that be necessary.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

*Vice-President*

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** – (HU) Madam President, as a representative of the first Member State to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, I would like to congratulate the Swedish Presidency on Hungary's behalf. An excellent job has been done. We have seen a Czech in this House who is a friend of Europe, Mr Havel, while Czech President Klaus has caused a rather great deal of concern and has not shown himself to be a friend of Europe.

We must finalise as quickly as possible the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the appointment of the new Commission and the establishment of the relevant structures so that we can focus on the real work.

I regard it as very important that the Treaty of Lisbon is the first to feature the rights of persons belonging to minorities. I urge Mrs Wallström, who is a great champion of minorities, to mention to President Barroso to keep his promise that the prospective commissioner for fundamental rights will deal with minorities' rights, including those of indigenous minorities, such as the Sami, and those of immigrant minorities and the Roma.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE).** – Madam President, in Ireland, they are asking us whether there is great excitement now that the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified. In truth, I tell them there is not because it took so long and the birth and delivery were so difficult. There is relief and some pleasure but a realisation, as there is in this debate, that the real work begins now and that it is a tough job to appoint the right people. It is not about jobs for the boys and girls, but about appointing the right people for all of those very important positions that have been created. I am sorry that it is taking extra time to do that because it does delay the final formation of all the institutions – and we have a lot of work to do – but perhaps it is better that we have that slight delay and get the right people in place.

The top jobs, as we have described them, are important, and they will require people with commitment, dedication and a desire to improve the European Union, not just to be in a job.

Lastly, on strong institutions, Mr Barroso is absolutely right. You need to hear what we are saying in this Parliament. Listen carefully. We are the closest to our electorate. We are directly elected.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE).** – (RO) I very strongly appreciate what has been said by Mr Reinfeldt and I welcome, in particular, the fact that the European Union reached a common position for the Copenhagen conference at the European Council in October.

The European Union has already adopted, off its own bat, robust measures for combating climate change, making progress towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions. However, it is obvious that the European Union's solo effort cannot guarantee absolute success at the international negotiations.

I believe that it is extremely important for the European Union to make the transition to a reduction target of more than 20% only while retaining certain conditions, without which we consider that the EU's effort would be excessive.

The conditions ought to relate, in particular, to the mandatory legal nature of the future agreement. In addition, specific targets for cutting emissions should be adopted by the developed countries on a par with those adopted by the EU, along with the corresponding contributions from the developing countries.

**Heidi Hautala (Verts/ALE).** – (FI) Madam President, we have a very interesting arrangement in this House at the moment, which is that all three institutions are being represented by a woman: Mrs Malmström for Sweden, the country to hold the Presidency, Mrs Wallström for the Commission, and you, Madam President, for Parliament. I would like to see us have leading women in top posts regularly in the future, and a lot more than now. I know that Mrs Wallström and Mrs Wallis, Vice-President of the European Parliament, put forward

an interesting initiative and included us other leading women in Parliament and the Commission in the process.

We wrote to the Commission's President, Mr Barroso, saying that we wanted to see changes and that we wanted to see a fairer balance of women and men in the Commission and other top positions. I would hope that we can now seize the opportunity, because, although the President of the European Commission supports our ideas fully, the Heads of State or Government are, unfortunately, not doing anything to take responsibility for this woeful situation. We cannot allow the Union to be represented continually only by the faces of men.

**Jaroslav Paška (EFD).** – (SK) I would like to begin by expressing my support for President Klaus and the position of the Czech Republic. I imagine that, just as Germany had to listen to the decision of the Constitutional Court, Mr Klaus also had to wait for the decision of the Constitutional Court.

As far as his approach is concerned, I consider his actions to be the responsible actions of a statesman who, as long as he felt a measure of legal uncertainty, waited for the opinion of the relevant institution, which was the court.

I would also like to point out that the Lisbon Treaty is entering into force at a time of economic crisis in Europe. The current decisions of the governments that have taken steps to overcome the economic crisis were not effective, were not efficient and from this perspective, I think that we must proceed in future in a more coordinated way and not take ad hoc decisions which fail to produce a sufficient effect in terms of supporting employment and economic development.

I therefore believe that when appointing the new Commission, we must ensure that it is staffed by experts and professionals.

**Enikő Győri (PPE).** – (HU) I firmly believe that the Treaty of Lisbon will undoubtedly enable Europe to function on a more secure basis and in a more logical manner, with a stronger focus on the problems affecting citizens' daily lives.

However, we must also ask what price we have paid to achieve this. The price we have paid was actually that we have undermined our values and let pragmatism triumph over values. You know what I am referring to here. The European Union granted the Czech president his absurd request, not to mention that he said that a Czech opt-out was needed due to the Beneš Decrees. Let me remind you that under the Beneš Decrees, many millions of Hungarians and Germans were disenfranchised and deported. In my view, what the European Union did is unacceptable from a legal, political and moral perspective.

We have criticised the Czech constitutional system from a legal perspective, we have monitored the view of the Czech Parliament and we are including the document politically in any future accession, having possibly penalised a country which has nothing to do with this, Croatia. From a moral standpoint, it is unacceptable to give an opt-out on such an issue.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) I welcome the European Council's adoption of the strategy on the Baltic Sea region. This is a model which the European Union must also apply to the Danube region, thereby contributing to the economic development, as well as the economic and social cohesion, of this region and, last but not least, to the European Union's competitiveness.

The European Union will attend the Copenhagen conference as the leader in the battle against climate change. The European Union has already assumed unilaterally the '20-20-20' objective. The energy and climate change package is part of Community legislation and is in the process of implementation.

I urge the European Union to establish quickly an effective, innovative framework for financing the eco-efficient economy.

In addition, the European Union must also focus on financing the appropriate measures for adapting to climate change.

Last but not least, the European Union must be able to generate investment in industry and public services in order to safeguard jobs.

**Kinga Gál (PPE).** – (HU) Madam President, Mrs Malmström and Mrs Wallström, two decades have elapsed since the Iron Curtain was torn down. While, in some new Member States, the change of regime has taken place within the legal framework and state structure, the past is still present in political attitudes and in the authorities' reactions in tense situations. Let us just reflect on the events which took place in Budapest in

autumn 2006, where those whose most fundamental freedoms and human rights were trampled underfoot at that time have still not received truth and justice to this day, not to mention those belonging to national minorities in new Member States who, even now, encounter the bitter experience of discrimination, affecting their rights and opportunities.

Precisely because of the provisions contained in the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Commission must be prepared to ensure that when the portfolios are created, appropriate emphasis is placed on the issues of human rights and freedoms inside the European Union. At the same time, the remit of this portfolio must extend to protecting the rights of traditional national minorities and linguistic minorities as well, as we feel that there is still a great deal to be done in this area. Whether we like it or not, unsolved problems affecting these indigenous communities are present within the European Union. The European Union must deal with them and it is its duty to help citizens fighting to exercise their rights.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, adoption of the long-awaited Lisbon Treaty is now behind us. It will surely lead to a strengthening and improvement of the European Union in the future.

For today, introduction of the treaty requires a number of decisions concerning authority, personnel and, above all, establishment of a formula for cooperation between the new leaders – the leaders who have to make the new vision of Europe a reality. Matters connected with the treaty must not prevent us from seeing problems of immediate importance, that is, the active fight against the economic crisis, measures to tackle the rise in unemployment and organising the supervision of financial institutions.

An understanding in Copenhagen is important and necessary, but a time of crisis is not a good moment to make decisions about how much will be allocated to this objective by which countries and international organisations, and what commitments they will make. The most important task today for the EU and its Member States is to resolve economic and social problems.

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – Madam President, it is a great honour for me, like my colleague, Mrs McGuinness, to be here today on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall and on the eve of the Lisbon Treaty coming into being. This is a privilege, especially as Ireland voted by 67% in favour of the Lisbon Treaty, which was a reflection of the endorsement of the work of the European Union over many years.

In years to come, people will also look at the dismantling of the USSR and see that civil wars were not widespread as a result, as happened in so many countries, my own country included, when peace and freedom came to the country but led to civil war.

Historians will point to the role of the European Union in offering support and guidance and comfort to these countries so that civil war did not follow on a widespread basis.

Finally, there has been much talk about the names of people to fill the functions of President and High Representative. I think we should also look at the title. If the President is not a President per se, then say he is a Chairman; why not call him a Chairman? Having three Presidents is confusing for the public.

**Gay Mitchell (PPE).** – Madam President, I would like to say first of all how pleased I was to attend the Development Days in Stockholm and to congratulate the Presidency on the way those days were organised.

I took part in a debate recently on the Irish public service radio, RTÉ, with a woman who was very concerned that we were cutting health spending and not doing enough to cut back on development aid spending. I had to explain that it was not a matter of either/or but that it was a matter of both. We can do both. I would urge, given that we are concentrating so much on the need for recovery in Europe and the need to deal with the crisis we find ourselves in – which, of course, must be at the top of our domestic agenda – that we do not lose sight of the fact that 11 million children are dying each year in the developing world, five million of them because they do not have medicines we have had for 30 years.

So please keep that at the top of the agenda and make sure, when we appoint the new person in charge of external relations, that dealing with this issue remains one of our key objectives. Well done on what you have done so far.

**Crescenzo Rivellini (PPE).** – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, it is only right that the Treaty of Lisbon and the appointment of the members of the Council should come 20 years after the fall of the Wall. The fall of the Wall marked the start of the real Europe. Twenty years ago, a wall came tumbling down, a wall of concrete but one full of prejudices, tyranny and hunger for so many citizens of the East, and today we should stop celebrating the fall of the Wall and ask ourselves instead what we should do now that it has

gone. In fact, other walls have gone up in the meantime: the wall between countries of the North and the South of the planet; between richer and poorer countries; between countries that produce goods and countries that produce ideas. These walls are much higher and much more difficult to bring down; they may cause major problems for humankind as a whole, as well as wars.

For this reason, the European Council candidates, who will have to be nominated after Lisbon, must not be nominated by a small few behind closed doors. Those who want to make a contribution and who want to stand as candidates must make the European Parliament and Europe as a whole aware of what they intend to do and what they are able to do. If we knock down that 'nomination' wall, whereby the future candidates are selected on the basis of balances among nations and not of their personal qualities, then we will have finally built the nation of Europe.

**Andrew Henry William Brons (NI).** – Madam President, the British opposition leader has announced an intention to renegotiate parts of the Lisbon Treaty. That would, of course, require the consent of all 27 countries. He has also announced the introduction of a Sovereignty Bill, which would force a referendum in the event of further treaties. This, of course, could easily be repealed by subsequent governments.

Would the Council and Commission agree that the Conservative leader's plans are just hot air? His party must decide either to accept the Lisbon Treaty or, in my opinion better still, take the United Kingdom completely out of the European Union.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, we have just had a very interesting debate, and I thank you for your comments.

The Swedish Presidency shares your joy at seeing the Treaty of Lisbon finally ratified in the 27 countries. This will give us a more effective, more democratic Europe, and a stronger role on the international stage. I am delighted about that.

I also agree with those who said that, although it was perhaps a coincidence, President Klaus chose a very good week to sign the treaty: the same week that we are celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the communist dictatorship, the start of European unity and, finally, the victory of Robert Schuman's ideas over those of Joseph Stalin.

(Applause)

Speaking of the Czech Republic, I would like to respond to the question from Mr Duff by saying that what the Czechs have received is not a total opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Protocol 30 does not suspend the mandatory nature of the Charter in respect of the UK, Poland or the Czech Republic. It merely limits the way the Court can use it and, ultimately, it will be up to the Commission and the Court to interpret it whenever a conflict might arise.

As the Prime Minister said before leaving, the consultation with his 26 colleagues is now ongoing. It is difficult, but it is his goal. He has already invited them to a working dinner next Thursday.

It is too premature to speculate about the names yet. I also read the papers. I have heard names that you do not want to see; I have heard names that you would like to see. I thought I spotted one or two applications for the job here from Parliament also. You are welcome to send your applications to the Presidency – we will look into them. There is still a week left before Thursday. And, of course, we hear your concerns about regional balance, gender equality – something that I myself think is extremely important. We should be able to show to European citizens that Europe is not only run by men. But there are, as the Prime Minister said, only two posts to be created. All those requirements are very difficult to meet, but we will do our best and have listened to your advice.

When it comes to the High Representative, he or she will provide and finalise the framework that we just adopted on the European External Action Service. He or she will do that, together with Parliament, before presenting it to the Council no later than April next year.

As has been said many times, the High Representative will also be subject to questions and hearings here in Parliament and thereby be able to discuss and develop his or her views on foreign policy.

On the economy, I wanted to say to Marita Ulvskog, who is perhaps not here at present, that the Swedish Presidency is not at all giving up its ambitions on exit strategies. On the contrary, it is extremely important that we stick to the ambition of – not now, but in a little while – two exit strategies. Because if we do not, if

we allow our economies to increase budget deficits, that will hurt the most vulnerable people in society, and we do not want to do that.

We do see light at the end of the tunnel. There is economic recovery on the way, but we will still suffer in most countries from high unemployment and, therefore, it is too early to implement the exit strategies. However, we need to discuss them and we need to have a plan to do that, if we want to have a sustainable economy to give to future generations.

Finally, on climate change, we have not lowered our ambitions. The Swedish Presidency, the Commission and many others work day and night. We convince, we negotiate, we argue, we try to drag our partners with us and we try to get them on board. There have been numerous meetings, and there are still meetings left, even if there are only 25 days left to Copenhagen.

It is true that there is awareness globally and that lots of things are happening in many countries all over the world. That is encouraging, but it is not enough if we want to respect the 2 °C target.

We do not have all the pieces of the puzzle in order to achieve a legally binding deal: that is a fact. I deplore it, but it is a fact. We can say that we still strive for it, we still do, but it will not happen because several partners say that they are not ready to take this step yet. Europe is still in the lead, and we still keep on working for a very ambitious agreement with a clear framework which includes all partners and a timetable for concluding the negotiations. The aim is to replace Kyoto with a binding agreement. I wish to thank Parliament for the work it is doing on this at present as well the work it will have to do after Copenhagen.

Europe is still in the lead. We will keep on being in the lead. We have the highest ambitions, so far. We have confirmed the Commission's estimates and are backing them. We are ready to play our part. There will be a global distribution key based on emissions and the ability to pay. We have a working group looking at the internal burden-sharing. However, the Member States did not feel ready yet to reveal the exact figures that we will pay. This is because we want to keep on putting pressure on other countries because they should also pay for this as it is in their interest.

So, we will spend every waking minute working on this. We thank you for the encouragement and look forward to working together with Parliament on this and other issues.

**Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the Commission.** – (FR) Since the Swedish minister has spoken in French and English, I ought to speak in Swedish.

(SV) Madam President, I will attempt to speak Swedish and say something about an important point that has been raised here today, namely how the text of the new treaty is related to the reality that we want to change, how the text of the new Treaty of Lisbon is to guide us and give us the tools we need to take decisions on how to combat climate change, how to deal with the economic crisis and what follows in its wake, namely unemployment and social problems, and how to tackle migration problems and other issues that are high on our agenda.

That is how these things link in, just as Mr Barnier said earlier. This is, of course, linked to the implementation and execution and to who we appoint as our representatives in the Commission and, of course, as leaders in the top posts that are now to be filled. As you know, it is the case, at least in Swedish, that the 'right man in the right place is often a woman' and I believe that applies in this instance, too. Thankfully, I know that I have the Commission President's support when I say that the procedure that is to follow now is, of course, very important from a democratic point of view. It is also the Member States' opportunity to show that they are not merely paying lip service to this, but that they do indeed have competent, capable candidates who are women and who they are prepared to put forward.

Otherwise, those of us who constitute the majority of the EU's population will become a minority when it comes to taking democratic decisions. Just as Václav Havel has written and said many times, democracy is not something that has, once and for all, and irrevocably fallen from the sky, democracy is something we need to maintain and continually fight for again and again. We have, of course, worked closely with the Swedish Presidency and I would like once again, both on my own behalf and on behalf of the Commission, to express my thanks for the hard work that I know the Swedish Presidency has put in, including in preparation for what is now to be implemented.

As Mr Barroso said earlier, the Commission has today taken a decision on the first measures that we are to be responsible for, namely the citizens' initiative. We will begin with a broad round of consultations when we will send out a green book containing ten questions. If we can get a good number of responses to this by



the end of January, we hope, after a quick debate, including here in Parliament, to be able to have the new citizens' initiative in place and ready to be implemented by the end of next year. This is, of course, a good example of how we can use the new sections of the Treaty of Lisbon and the new possibilities that it provides to give citizens a stronger voice and greater influence.

The climate issue and the climate negotiations have already been mentioned by a good many people here and by the Minister for European Affairs. Naturally, the greatest strength we have is to speak with one voice and to continue to insist on a strong and, of course, binding agreement. We will, of course, be able to look at the form of the agreement when we know what our partners are bringing to the table in terms of offers and counteroffers. Finally, I hope, of course, that we will continue to cooperate closely on the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon. This work must start now, both here and in the Commission, and I will gladly present Parliament's views on how the Commission's work is to be organised to Mr Barroso, too. Once again, we are the guardians of the treaty and we will, of course, ensure that we follow the treaty to the letter.

(Applause)

**President.** – The debate is closed.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) The implementation of the legislation on trading pollutant emission certificates incurs costs which will be allocated in different ways in each country, according to the economic model in that country. Some countries already have a wider range of options enabling them to cut emissions without any significant increase in energy prices. The countries which are still going through processes for restructuring the energy sector would feel the impact of these measures disproportionately at consumer level, in relation to their ability to pay the costs of the changes. A country which has a large proportion of wind energy in its energy mix has taken the liberty to invest in renewable energy resources when it has already developed, causing pollution in the process. On the other hand, a country which still depends, to a large extent, on coal-based energy production is facing a technological gap which it needs to bridge, while also reducing its pollutant emissions. Eastern European countries are in the latter situation. For this reason, I believe that the decision on financing the battle against climate change must take this factor into account and exclude the countries from the last accession rounds from paying certain taxes which would impose an excessive burden on these economies.

**Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) At the moment, the European Council is devoting particular attention to the European Union's economic and financial situation. The global financial crisis has hit Europe's states, citizens and businesses extremely hard. As the situation regarding unemployment in Europe is expected to continue to deteriorate, an ongoing commitment must be made to dynamic labour market policies. The European Commission has forecast an unemployment rate of 10.25% across the 27 Member States. The Council and Commission must continue their efforts on devising recovery strategies in cooperation with the European Parliament and Member States by implementing the European Economic Recovery Plan.

When setting deadlines for the governments to discontinue their anti-crisis strategies, the situation and commitments of each Member State must be taken into account separately. In Romania's case, the agreements with the European Union and International Monetary Fund are planned to cover 2009 and 2010. Consequently, any discontinuation of this financial support will disrupt the anti-crisis programme which Romania has launched. It is regrettable that the instability caused by blocking the parliamentary majority in Romania (PSD (Social Democratic Party) + PC (Conservative Party), PNL (National Liberal Party), UDMR (Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania)) raises doubts over the receipt of the third tranche from the IMF.

**Dominique Baudis (PPE), in writing.** – (FR) Following the negotiations at the European Council of 29 and 30 October and the decision of the Czech Constitutional Court of 3 November, the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, has signed the Treaty of Lisbon.

The treaty will now be able to enter into force, providing the institutions with a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and with a stable President of the Council for two and a half years. The structure of the new Commission, like the choice of figures who will occupy the posts of President of the Council and High Representative for Foreign Affairs, are crucial.

The choice of President of the Council is crucial since it is he or she who will embody Europe for two and a half years. Moreover, at a time of globalisation and of power struggles between continents, the choice of High Representative for Foreign Affairs is of undeniable strategic importance.

On 19 November, an extraordinary European Council will meet to negotiate the nominations. We are at a turning point in European history. The choices that you make, Heads of State or Government, will determine the Europe that you want in the future. Therefore, be ambitious, because Europe must be dynamic, proactive, effective and political if we want it to continue to progress.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** I welcome the firm commitment shown by the EU Heads of State or Government during the European Council last month to go on leading the fight against climate change.

European leaders have endorsed the estimate that, by 2020, the total costs of mitigation and adaptation in developing countries could amount to around EUR 100 billion annually. The EU has strengthened its negotiating position by reaching an agreement on the funding required to help developing countries and, in particular, the poorest countries. However, I am concerned by the fact that no clear decision has been made on the EU's contribution and each Member State's share of the total burden, taking into account each country's ability to pay. For the Copenhagen conference to succeed, it is vital that a political agreement is reached that covers the most important points more amply, particularly with regard to the commitments to be taken on by all concerned.

**Nessa Childers (S&D), in writing. –** Our European leaders failed yet again to break the deadlock in the negotiations for the conference in Copenhagen. Of course, this summit was spun in the media as a success when, in truth, we got nothing but waffle. Our European leaders had the chance to make a just and credible offer of financing to the developing world to cover the costs of climate change, which is affecting their countries the most, but which is caused by us in the developed world. This summit did not meet the standard set by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety of this Parliament and by civil society around the world, which have called for no less than EUR 30 billion to be pledged by the EU and, crucially, for a firm commitment that this would be new and additional to existing overseas development aid.

Copenhagen or no Copenhagen, climate change will be with us for decades to come. This is the biggest test so far of the 21st century. We must reach a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen, and for that, we need from our European leaders real political courage and less of the waffle.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT)** At a time when Europe has finally managed to overcome the treaties crisis in which it was embroiled and the Treaty of Lisbon has, at last, been ratified by the 27 Member States, I welcome the fact that there is a new legal and institutional framework that will allow the way the Union functions to be tailored in line with its current size, through consolidating Parliament's powers and focusing specifically on the role of national parliaments in European integration.

It is the moment we have been waiting for and, with the Treaty of Lisbon having been approved, it is an opportunity for the Union, now that it has its new institutional framework, to commit to the main tasks it will have to perform in the immediate future. At this point, I must point out the action that is expected from the European Union to combat the crisis, to stimulate the economy, to strengthen market confidence, with a particular emphasis on improving the level of unemployment in Europe. Now that we are seeing tentative signs of economic recovery, we must, then, focus our efforts on stimulating the European economy, paying special attention to the primary and secondary sectors – with a particular emphasis on agriculture – which have been badly affected by the crisis, and the creation of a European supervision structure.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT)** Once again, the main priority at this European Council was, regrettably, to adopt the conditions guaranteeing the entry into force of the so-called Treaty of Lisbon by the end of 2009, in other words, to adopt positions enabling swift ratification by the Czech Republic. The main concerns of the leaders of the European Union are the institutional issues that allow for quicker progress in the capitalist, federalist and militaristic integration of the European Union.

Issues concerning the economic, financial and social crisis therefore took a back seat. Indeed, the little progress that was made is a result of great pressure from important sectors in several Member States, of which the milk crisis is an example. Even here, the Council only went as far as increasing the budget for 2010 by just EUR 280 million.

However, the proposals just tabled by the European Commission following on from the Council's guidelines are very worrying, in terms of both the excess deficit and the announcement to raise the retirement age. Instead of a response to the serious social problems of poverty and unemployment, what they are proposing are measures that will exacerbate the social situation and the glaring inequalities that already exist.

**Zita Gurmai (S&D), in writing.** – The Council meeting was crucial for the European Union, for it cleared away the last obstacle to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. However, I warn all of us not to consider it as a result per se. We are only halfway: now we have to get used to the new institutional framework. When it comes to adaptation, the Parliament is well on track, as it has already worked on its Rules of Procedure and has debated the installation of new institutions, such as the European External Service. The next step is to set up a Commission which shows leadership and portrays our values. Therefore, I urge Member States to nominate competent, qualified people, and to make an effort to have a gender-balanced Commission. Equally, we need to choose the top leaders as soon as possible, and not to waste time. There is no time to be lame ducks. If we consider ourselves as a carrier of universal values, we need leaders now who are capable of representing them credibly – for example, in Copenhagen, where nations will be negotiating the near future of mankind, and Europe will need all its talent, responsibility and generosity to reach an agreement.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) First of all, I welcome the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon by the Czech Republic. The coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December and the new interinstitutional relations provided for by it will enable the European Union's representatives to manage more efficiently both the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis and negotiations in Copenhagen on combating climate change. The signs of economic recovery need not entail immediate withdrawal of the support policies as this could have an adverse effect on the economy in the long term. I also hope that Member States reach agreement on devising a coordinated strategy for withdrawing the incentive measures when the right moment arrives for this. We are also expecting a future agreement on a package of proposals for setting up a new financial supervisory structure for the European Union. Last but not least, we should not forget that Europe's citizens will now look even more towards a consolidated Europe and will expect the EU to improve the employment situation in the coming years. This is why European institutions must promote new dynamic labour market policies as soon as possible.

**Iosif Matula (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) I wish to express my support for the positions adopted by the European Commission and European Council highlighted in the documents presented. The Copenhagen conference is approaching and the EU must play a vital role in negotiating a comprehensive and ambitious global agreement for combating climate change.

The European Council's conclusions mention the finances required, both at a global and European level, to combat the adverse effects of climate change, such as drought, fires and flooding, which result in so many victims and such great losses every year.

I believe that the EU must provide financial support as consistently as possible for measures taken by Member States with regard to irrigation, building dams, forestation and encouraging the production of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, biofuels and hydro. We have also noticed a great need for financial support from the EU at local authority and private individual level where the necessary funds are not available for making buildings more energy efficient. The EU must continue to devote greater attention to this aspect so that citizens remain at the heart of European policies.

**Franz Obermayr (NI), in writing.** – (DE) What happened a few days ago at the summit of the European Council is outrageous and shakes all faith in the community of values so often emphasised by the EU. The EU wanted to make President Klaus sign at any price, even by indirectly giving its approval to historical injustice. On the basis of the Beneš Decrees, up to 1947 around 2.9 million people were declared enemies of the state and expelled purely on the basis of their nationality. As a result, around 230 000 people met a tragic death. The decrees do not judge people on the basis of specific crimes they have committed; the starting point is purely ethnic origin. Today, we would call this ethnic cleansing, something that should, in fact, be openly rejected by all of the Member States. From a legal point of view, the displaced people were denied the right to the presumption of innocence, a proper trial and appropriate compensation for expropriation. Felix Ermacora, professor of international law and former UN rapporteur, even came to the conclusion in his 1991 legal report that the expulsion was tantamount to genocide. In spite of all this, and without any objective justification, President Klaus was granted a derogation in order to ensure the non-application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. However, this 'footnote' will not enter into force until Iceland or Croatia ratifies the treaty. Claims for compensation could be made during this window of opportunity.

**Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing.** – (RO) The EU's unilateral action is not sufficient, even though it is at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

It will not be possible to conclude a global agreement on reducing and adapting to the effects of climate change without the involvement of the developing countries, especially the most advanced among them. The effects of climate change are already having an impact on the development of these states: drought, flooding, natural disasters, desertification, with all the economic and social repercussions they entail.

Any action to reduce the effects and adapt to the situation requires a robust mechanism to be in place for measuring, reporting on and verifying developments, along with a properly managed fund comprising public and private finances.

These combined efforts will help achieve the targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, developing a sustainable economy and creating green jobs.

**Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), in writing.** – (PL) Mr Barroso will soon be assigning portfolios to the new commissioners. I hope he will not make a glaring error, such as he did during the last parliamentary term, when he proposed as Commissioner for Justice a candidate with a 19th-century mentality, a Catholic fundamentalist, male chauvinist and homophobe. At the time, the European Parliament did not allow the Commission to be compromised in this way. I trust Parliament will not have to intervene again.

In accordance with Mr Barroso's declarations, the portfolios should be allocated while maintaining the golden principle of balance. The Commission should be decidedly more social, and the Commissioners should be competent. Mr Barroso does not have to worry about re-election now, so he can concentrate his efforts on tackling the crisis and on the social aspects of his programme. To this end, it is essential to entrust the economic and social portfolios to Commissioners from our socialist political family.

If the Commission is not balanced with respect to gender, it will be a sign that there is no true equality. It is high time for the continually unfulfilled ideal of the equality of women and men to be made a practical reality. It is men who have been elected to the highest positions in the European Union (President of the European Parliament and President of the European Commission). This, unfortunately, is overt promotion of discrimination against women. It is time to change this, and to make EU law banning all discrimination a reality at last. It is time for women! It will be easy to find suitable candidates among the 250 million dynamic, bold and strong female citizens of the European Union, and this includes female candidates for the positions of President of the European Council and High Representative for Common Foreign Policy.

## 16. EU-Russia Summit on 18 November 2009 in Stockholm (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the EU-Russia Summit on 18 November 2009 in Stockholm.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Madam President, as you just said, the summit between the EU and Russia will take place in Stockholm on 18 November. It is a good opportunity for the EU to evaluate relations between ourselves and Russia. I know that many Members here in Parliament are following developments in Russia very closely. I would therefore like to present the main issues that we intend to discuss during the summit, and I am sure that the Commissioner would like to add more details about the areas relating to the Commission's sphere of responsibility.

In general, clearly we want to use the summit to develop the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia. We have a lot to gain from cooperation with Russia in all areas. We need Russia if we are to be able to deal with the global challenges effectively. However, we must also make it clear to Russia that our partnership must be based on respect for a common commitment and common values. That means respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The summit will give us the opportunity to exert pressure on Russia to fulfil its contractual obligations in these areas and in other areas, too.

One of the most important issues will be climate change. The Council will emphasise the fact that close cooperation between the EU and Russia is important to enable us to achieve a result in Copenhagen. Russia should promise tangible and comparable reductions in its emissions of greenhouse gases, corresponding to the two-degree target that the G8 agreed on in LAquila.

The energy issue is linked to this – it is a matter of energy efficiency and energy security. With regard to Russia's position as the EU's most important energy partner, the summit will give us the opportunity to

emphasise the need to regain trust and transparency in relations between the EU and Russia in the area of energy. We will also express our disappointment over Russia's recent withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty.

We hope that a stronger early warning mechanism will be established and approved at the summit. This should be accompanied by clear guarantees from Russia and separately from other relevant third countries that the transit or export of gas to the EU will not be reduced or stopped in the event of future energy disputes.

We will, of course, discuss the economic and financial crisis. The Council would like an agreement at the summit on the need for continued, coordinated efforts as a response to the crisis and confirms that we will insist on our economies being open and on the necessity to avoid protectionist measures. The summit will also give us the chance to assess the progress made in our work relating to the four common spaces. We will use the opportunity to stress the importance of making progress in the areas where it is needed or where problems have arisen.

Russia's change in position with regard to the World Trade Organisation has created a new situation that we are in the process of analysing. Delays in Russia's WTO accession will affect our bilateral relations, including with regard to the negotiations for a new agreement between the EU and Russia. We will reiterate our support for Russia's accession to the WTO, and this is important for Russia's integration in the world economy.

In the meantime, we need to work on the remaining trade and economic problems, for example, the Siberian overflight fees, measures at the border that hamper the importation of commercial vehicles into Russia, the discriminatory road taxes, plans to limit the import of containers by road, export duties on timber and the protectionist measures Russia has recently taken.

I am very well aware of the great concern that the European Parliament has about the human rights situation in Russia. Evidence of this can be seen, in particular, in your decision to award this year's Sakharov Prize to human rights defenders in Russia. The Swedish Presidency shares your concern and we will ensure that human rights issues will have a prominent place in discussions at the summit. Of course, we welcome President Medvedev's statement on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, but this must be followed by concrete actions. The human rights situation in Russia is disturbing. We will highlight, in particular, the most recent events in the North Caucasus, which has been the scene of violence against human rights defenders, crime prevention personnel, representatives of the authorities and the population at large. It is particularly worrying that human rights defenders and journalists have been killed, not only in the North Caucasus, but also in Russia as a whole. We will therefore reiterate our appeal to Russia to do its utmost to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without having to live in fear of violence, harassment or threats.

With regard to foreign policy and security issues, we will emphasise the importance of maintaining and improving the dialogue concerning the immediate vicinity that we share. We need to cooperate with Russia on this if we are to be able to make progress in achieving a peaceful solution to long drawn-out conflicts. Obviously, we will not deviate from our fundamental principles.

We will raise the matter of Georgia and reiterate that Russia must fully honour its commitments under the six-point plan laid down on 12 August and, subsequently, the agreement of 8 September 2008. We must also regain the necessary trust with regard to Akhagori, Upper Kodori and the checkpoint in Perevi. We will also call on Russia to use its influence to grant the EU Monitoring Mission access to the Georgian areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in accordance with its country-wide mandate. The summit will also give us the opportunity to assess progress made at the Geneva talks, and in this regard, we expect Russia to continue its committed approach.

We realise that we need to cooperate with Russia with regard to the so-called frozen conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. We will stress the importance of a continued commitment to the conflict settlement mechanisms, these being the Minsk Group and the '5+2' format in Transnistria.

Russia's active commitment to promoting dialogue between the Armenian and the Azerbaijan presidents in the Nagorno-Karabakh matter is, of course, welcome. However, we will also point out to Russia the importance of involving the Minsk Group in all stages of the process. The EU is prepared to get involved in and support the Minsk Process, among other things, through measures to promote trust. The summit should express its support for the ratification and implementation of the new protocols between Armenia and Turkey. Other matters in this area relate to the Euro-Atlantic Security Partnership and the Eastern Partnership.

With regard to Euro-Atlantic Security, we will urge Russia to take an active part in the Corfu Process prior to a forward-looking decision being taken in Athens. The summit should ask for Russia's confirmation that it supports the fundamental principles of the process, in other words, complete respect for and implementation of the regulations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that the OSCE is the main forum for debate on the Corfu Process, and the fact that all aspects of the overarching security strategy should be dealt with in a balanced way.

As far as the EU is concerned, we are willing to inform Russia of all incidents relating to the Eastern Partnership and reiterate that third countries may, on a case-by-case basis, be entitled to take part, in accordance with the joint declaration in Prague of May 2009. The summit will also allow us to raise a number of international and regional issues. I think it is extremely likely that issues such as Iran, Afghanistan/Pakistan, the South Caucasus and, of course, the Middle East will be raised.

Madam President, honourable Members, I have talked for quite a long time, but I know that you are very committed to this matter. It is an important summit with a lot of items on the agenda and I look forward to hearing your views and suggestions when we make the final preparations ahead of this meeting.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, just a year ago, we reviewed EU-Russian relations and decided that the European Union should – despite our major differences with Russia over the conflict in Georgia – pursue cooperation with this major neighbour, including on the negotiation of the new agreement. We also concluded that we should base our relations on the assessment of our own self-interest. The Stockholm Summit next week will therefore focus on areas – as has been said already – where there is mutual interest, for example, climate change and energy, and the global economic crisis.

The financial crisis has hit Russia hard, and this is precisely the kind of policy area in which the European Union also has a clear interest in seeking a common policy approach. The G20 commitments were an important step in the right direction. I think it is important that they are now upheld by all partners. It is crucial, too, that Russia does not succumb to the temptations of protectionism. A tendency to protectionist practices is already hurting EU businesses.

Clearly, we believe that the best way forward is to work together in a rules-based multilateral format. The summit will be an opportunity to again stress the importance of Russia's WTO accession. Russia's intention to complete negotiations in parallel with Belarus and Kazakhstan, with which it is planning a customs union, still leaves many questions unanswered. At the same time, we hope to get a better understanding of Russia's new approach at the summit. This is important, not least in the context of the ongoing negotiations for the new agreement which are being held by the Commission and which must contain clear, legally binding provisions on trade and investment and also on energy.

The summit should also provide definitive clarity as to the conditions concerning bilateral trade from 1 January 2010 onwards under the new common external tariff system of the customs union.

Turning to climate change, my colleague has already said that the summit should underline the leading roles that Russia and the European Union can play together in achieving results at the Copenhagen meeting. Russia has the scope to make a very substantial contribution, given its enormous scope for emissions reductions through improvements in energy efficiency. We will therefore be calling on Russia to commit itself to more ambitious reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, comparable with the targets we have set ourselves in the EU.

On energy security, work continues on an enhanced early warning mechanism. We regret Russia's withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), but we recall that the principles of the ECT were affirmed under Russia's presidency of the G8, for instance, in the St Petersburg Declaration. These should therefore form the basis of our work on energy security under the new EU-Russia agreement. While we should be ready to discuss Russia's wish for a wider debate on international energy security architecture, I think we will also want, above all, to establish the essentials of our bilateral energy relationship.

While we work well with Russia on many aspects of international relations, we need to make more progress in our cooperation in the common neighbourhood. We will therefore continue to explain our view that the political and economic stability encouraged by the Eastern Partnership is, finally, in the interests of all parties. We will continue to encourage Russia to work constructively for the resolution of the outstanding issues and conflicts, be they in Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh, and also through the Geneva process.

President Medvedev's proposal for a wider discussion of Euro-Atlantic security has led to a new process of talks under the aegis of the OSCE. I think it is now important that this debate does not distract us from the immediate task of resolving today's frozen conflicts. The EU-Russia strategic partnership must – as was said before – be based on common commitments in the area of human rights and democracy. Russia has entered into commitments as a member of the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and these have to be upheld.

I think it is also crucial that we go further and work together on all the different issues. We know that the relationship between Russia and the EU is complex, but full of opportunities, and also has a vast potential. We will therefore pursue our principled course of critical, but also constructive, engagement with our neighbour, confident that Russia, too, knows its interests lie in maintaining a real strategic partnership with us.

**Michael Gahler**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, it is good that there is a regular summit between the EU and Russia, as there is, of course, a lot to discuss. Key topics on the comprehensive agenda include the planned cooperation agreement, securing the supply of energy, Russia's accession to the WTO, climate change, the situation in the Caucasus and, above all, the situation with regard to democracy and the rule of law in Russia.

Disarmament, arms control and a possible anti-missile shield are also on the agenda. We also both face threats in the form of international terrorism and fundamentalism. A country like Iran is a challenge for both the EU and Russia. Both of us belong to the Middle East Quartet and, together with the US, are obliged to work towards a solution in this region.

We hope that the conditions will soon be in place for visa-free travel between the EU and Russia. I am sure that unhindered interpersonal contact is the best way to give young Russians, in particular, a real picture of the life and ideas of Europeans and our intentions towards Russia.

The prerequisite that will enable us to get through this agenda is, in my opinion, agreement within the EU and clarity in our message towards the outside world. Although it is a cliché, all too often we have experienced divisions amongst ourselves, or we have allowed ourselves to be divided, over nuances. In this regard, no EU government should believe that it can negotiate better in the long term alone on an equal footing with Russia than we can achieve through the combined weight of the EU.

As a community of values, we have a common view of the situation with regard to the rule of law and human rights in Russia and we should say so. Unfortunately, we had to award the Sakharov Prize to a Russian organisation. My thanks to the Presidency for its clarity in this regard.

As we are equally dependent on energy supplies, we need to ensure that the agreements in the three-way relationship between Russia, Ukraine and the EU are formulated in such a way as to prevent a drop in gas pressure in parts of the EU every winter. In the Caucasus, we must jointly demand unrestricted access for EU observers.

As regards disarmament or the anti-missile shield, the EU must make its position clear to Russia and the US. If we achieve all of this, then Russia will take us seriously and we will co-exist well.

**Adrian Severin**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, debates on Russia very often divide us into ideologists and pragmatists, confrontational geo-strategists and conciliatorists, Cold War veterans and new utilitarian opportunists. I think that it is high time to move away from these dilemmatic Manichaeisms and to make clear points concerning our wish to engage in a constructive and efficient dialogue with Russia.

As far as I am concerned, we should always show firmness from the strategic point of view, but flexibility from the tactical point of view, in our relations with Russia. We should always defend our values and interests, but we should also show empathy and respect for the aspirations and interests of Russia.

This is the only basis on which we could develop confidence and mutual trust and find mutually efficient and acceptable solutions.

On a more concrete point, we must transform our eastern neighbourhood from an area of rivalries into an area of common strategies and common projects. A common strategy for the Black Sea area should perhaps slowly complement our synergy and give more substance to our present approach.

Within this context, we have to approach the issue of frozen conflicts in a very fair and open way and leave aside any taboos in trying to find solutions on a pragmatic basis.

We must also help Russia to meet its objective need to avoid being trapped as a possible oil- and gas-dependent power, while we have to achieve our independence from an energy point of view.

We have to look for something more imaginative in order to find true cooperation, technological cooperation and exploitation cooperation, opening the markets in the field of energy.

We must look together with Russia to a new global security arrangement or agreement. I think that the Medvedev initiative should not be immediately rejected. Some think that there is an agenda behind this initiative which we cannot accept. Others think that there is no agenda and it is a mere test of our reactions. Whatever is behind it, our current security arrangements are rooted in different times and we have to update them. We have to see what is still valid and we have to add something new to them.

My last point is that we have to take advantage of the new transatlantic relations in order to perhaps achieve a trilateral Russia-United States-Europe dialogue. We also have to think of such a trilateral approach in order at least to be sure that Russia and the United States will not cut deals without our participation.

**Kristiina Ojula**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ET) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I would like to stress clearly that good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations between the European Union and Russia are very important. However, such relations require good will on both sides, something that President Havel indeed referred to today in his afternoon speech.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that Russia has always valued strong partners highly. And today's preparation for the summit taking place in a week's time actually shows, as far as the European Union is concerned, that if we want to, we can speak with one voice. And this is very important – as is indeed shown by the resolution we have prepared – and in listening therefore to the council and the representatives of the Commission, I have a very good feeling about this. Also, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, needless to say, creates a larger and wider basis for this.

Now, though, let us look at this from the point of view of Russia. Actually, Russia has a very good opportunity next week to show a sincere desire to cooperate with us, whether in areas such as energy security or the preparation of a new framework agreement between the European Union and Russia, or, for example, guidelines for behaviour and thought on Russia's part in moving towards the WTO. It is true that at the moment, there are some ambivalent attitudes: President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin have given out different signals. I very much hope that next week, the European Union will gain some clarity on what kind of course Russia will therefore take towards the WTO. And certainly the European Union, I think, must support Russia in its movement towards the WTO.

Certainly, however, a very important issue on which Russia can demonstrate its cooperation with us is in cooperating and reaching an agreement on the area of climate change. This is something very concrete, and it is taking place very soon – in December at the Copenhagen Summit – and this is truly a matter where we should be able to weigh everything up and look at whether this cooperation between the European Union and Russia is therefore possible or not.

Ladies and gentlemen, it has very frequently been said over the past year that relations between the European Union and Russia should be made more pragmatic, and already I myself have heard people question this point: whether therefore, the European Union is just throwing aside human rights, basic values and the subject of democracy. I think that on no account should we do this, because if we did, then we would devalue ourselves completely, as well as the European Union as a whole. And bringing up human rights is not in any way to persecute Russia, push them into the corner or lecture them; bringing up human rights is, first and foremost, about looking after the people living in Russia; that is, protecting ordinary citizens.

And black clouds in the area of human rights are actually coming to Moscow once more, because – as you heard yesterday – the constitutional court has discussed the possible reinstatement of the death penalty from next year, and for liberals this is definitely a very tough subject. Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot say more on this subject here, but certainly as far as the conflicts are concerned, we intend to bring them up for discussion and we should definitely discuss them.

**Werner Schulz**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, this year, we are not only celebrating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall and the peaceful revolution, but 1989



was also the year that saw the death of Andrei Sakharov, who played a significant part in the fall of the totalitarian Eastern Bloc system. Andrei Sakharov also left us the advice that his country needs understanding and pressure – emphatic pressure. However, I would not translate the word *davlenie* as pressure these days, but rather as emphatic support and, indeed, emphatic support in all areas where Russia is moving towards modernisation and where the signs of a social market economy, democracy and the rule of law are beginning to emerge.

Russia's President Medvedev recently expressed his concern about the stagnation and problems in his country and called for support for his efforts to bring about reform. That is something we should provide, if it is a genuine request. This includes the involvement of Russia in international regulatory frameworks like the WTO and the Energy Charter. For that reason, we must not create any unnecessary obstacles. Russia also needs to acknowledge that it cannot deal with this crisis on its own.

However, as Václav Havel said earlier today, partnership also requires us to tell each other the whole truth. I would therefore like to say this: where elections are falsified, even the concept of steered democracy begins to create cynicism, and therefore the monitoring of elections is extremely important. Where critical journalists are murdered, the truth also dies. We are not making any progress with our 'change through trade' approach. Instead, we must place our relationship with Russia on a firm basis of values.

### IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

*Vice-President*

**Charles Tannock**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, the ECR Group accepts that Russia is a vital economic partner and a global diplomatic heavyweight, but this position brings with it responsibilities. The first such responsibility is to respect the territorial integrity of its neighbours such as Ukraine and Georgia and abandon the insulting 'near abroad' concept.

Russia must also take concrete steps to protect human rights and the rule of law, given the number of unsolved murders of journalists and human rights activists. The Sakharov Prize awarded to the human rights group Memorial shows just how seriously we in this Parliament view this issue.

Russia must also cooperate in the prevention of nuclear proliferation, particularly to Iran, and not sell Iran the S300 missile system to demonstrate solidarity with the west against this dangerous regime.

The rising nostalgia for the Soviet Union and Stalin is also very worrying.

Finally, as winter approaches, Russia cannot be permitted once again to use its virtual monopoly of gas supplies to Europe as a diplomatic weapon. The EU's commitment to diversification of source and supply under a common external energy security policy must surely strengthen our hand at the negotiating table with Russia.

**Vladimír Remek**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot imagine that EU representatives guided by a resolution drafted by the European Parliament will manage to achieve a result in Stockholm. If the Russian delegation has a similar recommendation, the summit is doomed to failure. Do we want the negotiations to assist cooperation between the EU and Russia? Of course we do. Russia is often described in the document as a key partner of the EU. However, almost everything is expressed in terms of demands and conditions rather than proposals. For example, responsibility for the success of the climate conference in Copenhagen is placed on Russia. It was Russia, nonetheless, that rescued the Kyoto Protocol, while the US refused to ratify it. At the same time, the unrealistic positions adopted in relation to Russia include the task of sorting out media freedom. The situation is definitely not ideal. At the same time, ladies and gentlemen, in the case of Italy, we decided during the last plenary session that this was an internal matter. Italy happens to be a Member State of the Union. So what are we hoping to achieve in Russia? If Russia is supposed to be an important partner, let us negotiate with her on that basis.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I shall be abstaining from the vote on this motion for a resolution because I find it somewhat contradictory. It is, in fact, acknowledged within the resolution that economic cooperation between Russia and Europe has vastly improved over the last 10 years. It is recognised that Russia has strengthened relations in the areas of energy, trade, visa liberalisation, illegal immigration control, the fight against terrorism, climate change and foreign policy, and on issues such as Iranian nuclear weaponry, and peacemaking in the Caucasus and the Middle East.

While we call for all these things, in the same resolution we strongly criticise Russia's domestic situation. There is a general feeling of aversion towards and mistrust of Russia that does not represent a sound basis for the cooperation that we are calling for. This does not mean we should close our eyes to the democratic and human rights situation in that country, but I believe that support and trust are needed more than criticism at the moment, precisely in order to improve the human rights situation in Russia.

**Zoltán Balczó (NI).** – (HU) While on the subject of EU-Russian relations, I must also mention today's formal sitting.

It is indeed 20 years ago that the Berlin Wall collapsed, putting an end to Soviet Communist dictatorship. Hungarians were among the greatest victims of this dictatorship. I must mention two additional facts. First of all, the status quo was able to continue for decades because the Western powers also wanted to maintain this situation after the Second World War. Secondly, the Soviet Union did not equate even then with the Russian people, who also suffered from Communist dictatorship. Russia is obviously our extremely important economic and strategic partner.

The European Union speaks out against human rights violations. It is indeed right to do so. However, does it have the moral basis for doing this after it acquired Václav Klaus's signature on the Treaty of Lisbon by letting the Beneš Decrees continue to apply, thereby accepting that as a consequence, certain peoples are considered collectively guilty?

At the last sitting, we discussed the US-EU Summit. The general drift of the debate was: what do we need to do to be accepted as the United States' good partner? However, the mood I am now sensing here is: what conditions will we impose on Russia so that we can accept it as a reliable partner? I believe that we must look to establish much more balanced cooperation with both these partners, if this is what we consider they are.

**Paweł Zalewski (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, the forthcoming EU-Russia Summit will confirm the importance which the European Union attaches to relations with Russia. In this context, I would like to draw attention to two questions which are fundamental from the point of view of the interests of Russia and the European Union. These questions influence those relations and, in fact, define them.

I refer to the problems of cooperation in the areas of energy and security. If the European Union and Russia are to achieve success together, and that is surely our aim, we must state our point of view very clearly. Our Russian partners do this in an accomplished manner, without ambiguity, because ambiguity causes misunderstandings. It is important that the European Union construct its point of view in exactly this manner.

The agreement reached by the largest political groups in the European Parliament on a joint and, indeed, very good motion for a resolution is a step which I value highly. However, I think it could be even better if we included a third amendment stressing the importance of EU-Russian cooperation in the area of energy, but also showing the basis on which such cooperation should take place. This means that, especially at a time of economic and financial crisis, this cooperation should be based on keeping the financial costs to a minimum, but also that all conditions related to the supply of energy should be stated.

The final matter concerns security. I would like to say a few words about the proposal of my political group, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), for a debate to be held on the subject of the Russian-Belarusian military exercises which assumed the need to repel a potential attack from Western Europe, from the territory of countries belonging to the European Union and NATO. It was with great regret that I received information that this debate had not found a place on the order of business and would not be the subject of discussion.

**Knut Fleckenstein (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the previous speakers have already clearly highlighted many points and problems, such as the human rights situation. It is important for us to make these points clearly, as only then will we be able to have an open and frank debate. If Russia is currently once again seriously discussing introducing the death penalty according to the US model, we cannot neglect to express our opinion on this.

I have two brief points to make. My first point relates to Russia's accession to the WTO and my sincere request, including to the Council and the Commission, is to provide as much support as possible for this. Of course, Russia must play its part, too, but we are both relying on this and it would be good for both of us if developments in this regard were to move in a positive direction. The fact that Russia wants to join the WTO and not just enter into a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan is a step in the right direction.

My second point is a sincere request for us not to lose sight of the development of our cooperation in the areas of science and research as well as in the area of civil society. We need a new impetus for cultural exchange as well as youth exchanges, not only in one direction, as Mr Gahler said, but in both directions. Every young person who takes part in this will develop an understanding for others and will become a messenger for a more positive development of our relations. I hope that we will talk more about these common interests and that these aspects will also assume greater importance.

**Heidi Hautala (Verts/ALE).** – (FI) Madam President, I want to mention three matters very briefly. Russia would do well to understand that it must become a state subject to the rule of law. It is very difficult to see how Russia could develop as an economy or as a society before it has an independent judiciary. It is impossible to imagine that foreign companies could feel that it is safe to invest in the country if there is no independent judiciary there.

Secondly, I would like to stress the importance of persuading Russia to commit to international rules. In the European Council, we have a problem in that Russia has not yet ratified Protocol 14, which would boost the effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights. We in the Baltic Sea region also want Russia to accede to the Espoo Convention on the assessment of the environmental impact of international projects.

Thirdly, human rights are important in themselves. I was very encouraged when Mrs Malmström said that the intention now was to raise issues of human rights at the summit. Please take along the results of the human rights dialogue and, furthermore, do it very publicly.

**Jacek Olgierd Kurski (ECR).** – (PL) Madam President, the EU-Russia Summit takes place in a week's time. I want to speak about this on a day which is of particular importance for my country, the day when Poland regained its independence. The independence not only of Poland, but also of other countries in the region, has always been threatened by Soviet, and then by Russian, imperialism.

Today, we want to feel safe at last in the structures of a Europe of free nations, and so all the more we must not fail to see how Russia is trying to rebuild its empire, and that it has never come to terms with the loss of that empire. This is why Russia attacked Georgia. This is why it is carrying out what is, to all intents and purposes, the *Anschluss* of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, why it is threatening Ukraine, why it is interfering in the anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, and why it uses its energy resources in a form of blackmail. This is why there is something both symbolic and sinister in the fact that just before the EU-Russia Summit, the country which currently has the Presidency of the European Union and is hosting the summit – Sweden – has withdrawn its ecological veto of the Nord Stream project. Nord Stream does not make any economic sense, and its sole objective is to cancel in practice the principle of energy solidarity, which was supposed to be one of the main principles and ideals of the Lisbon Treaty.

In the words of a phrase which is popular in my country, I call upon the old countries of the EU: do not go that way! Do not do deals with Russia which are politically motivated against the new Member States, because this threatens to wreck the idea of a common Europe.

**Anna Rosbach (EFD).** – (DA) Madam President, in Russia, there is freedom of the press in name only, not in practice. Critical journalists are intimidated, persecuted and murdered. Russia is ranked 153 in the worldwide press freedom index – in other words, press freedom in Russia is now worse than in Belarus, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Should this really be rewarded? Yet it does not stop there. We have the issue of gas supplies to European citizens. Again this year, we are seeing Russia threatening to disrupt gas supplies and there are indications that we will need to prepare for this possibility every winter in future. Yet can it really be right that we reward Russia for this?

I would like to suggest to the Council and the Commission that, instead of merely talking nicely to the Russians, it might be appropriate to speak out and say that this quite simply is not acceptable. What do you actually intend to do about the negative developments in the relationship between Russia and the EU? Or do you merely intend to let things carry on as they are? Do you actually want to reward this negative development?

**Nick Griffin (NI).** – Madam President, there is endless rhetoric here about friendship and cooperation between every state under the sun except for Russia. China commits genocide in Tibet. Turkey denies its Armenian holocaust. The USA flattens Iraq and this place fawns on them. But for Russia, there are only pompous and hypocritical lectures. This confrontational Russia phobia shamefully feeds the new Cold War drive of America's warmongering neo-con lobby.

Of course, there are some local differences between Russia and her neighbours, but can we not agree that next week's summit should be used to attempt to build bridges and cooperation between the eastern and western halves of our civilisation? For historical and cultural reasons, this is far more practical and safer than attempting to create unity with Turkey, Europe's ancient and eternal enemy.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE).** – (ES) Madam President, relations with Russia are very important: it is a permanent member of the Security Council and a military power; its cooperation is necessary in order to tackle the nuclear challenge of Iran, the issue of the Middle East, disarmament, climate change, etc.

Moreover, Russia is a neighbouring country of Europe with which many EU Member States have significant economic relationships and high levels of energy dependence. It is a country with which we have two regular annual summits (which certainly provide a good opportunity at which to evaluate the state of the relationship).

Now we are negotiating a new partnership agreement, which would increase cooperation in the so-called four 'common spaces'. In my view, the most important of these spaces is the economic and energy space: we need openness, clear rules, guarantees for investments, and Russia first of all needs to join the WTO.

Next week's summit should therefore be an opportunity to clarify Russia's intentions with regard to the WTO and to ensure it does not take initiatives that are incompatible with it. In addition, the gas supply crisis of recent years should not be allowed to recur and the new agreement must include the principles of the European Energy Charter which, as has already been said, is the treaty from which Moscow has unfortunately withdrawn.

We must continue to work on the other three spaces as well. I have already mentioned the importance of Russia as a global player.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can do many things together with Russia, but, as has also been said, there is one aspect of the relationship that we should not forget, since Russia is a European country and a neighbour. That is the need for it to respect human rights and the obligations that its membership of the Council of Europe imposes upon it in that regard.

One of the most obvious failures of the EU's external affairs policy is the lack of a common policy with regard to Russia. With the instruments of the Treaty of Lisbon, it will be simpler to create this common policy, but it is also necessary for us, as Member States, to have a genuine will to create such a united policy and not to continue prioritising bilateral channels with Moscow, which are, at times, openly divergent from each other.

**Kristian Vigenin (S&D).** – (BG) Madam President, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, Mrs Malmström, I cannot begin my speech without mentioning that today, we marked in this Chamber 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It seemed somehow that special emphasis was placed on what we have achieved during all these years, the fact that Europe has become united, thanks to the changes from twenty years ago, and that somehow one country had no involvement which, if we have to be honest, could have stopped these changes if it had wanted, in other words, the Soviet Union.

I am saying this because, in my view, these changes became possible precisely because the West initiated a policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union. Without making a parallel between the Soviet Union and present-day Russia, I want to say that what I heard from Mrs Ferrero-Waldner and Mrs Malmström is gratifying because it continues this policy of pragmatic partnership with Russia, highlighting that there are issues where the European Union cannot achieve success without the involvement of Russia.

I would like to stress, of course, that we are certainly concerned about the human rights situation and about other matters, such as the fact that, according to Amnesty International's assessment, the situation is changing for the worse: local elections have been rigged and there are problems with how civil organisations operate. At any rate, we must be united in our approach to Russia.

This is the conclusion which we must draw from recent years. I also want to say that one of the issues missing from the resolution which our Parliament is proposing is the Eastern Partnership. I would like specific attention to be devoted to the issue of the Eastern Partnership at the forthcoming summit meeting because this is the only way in which we can guarantee success for this new policy of ours.

**Paweł Robert Kowal (ECR).** – (PL) Madam President, Russia deserves to be treated seriously. I think that if our partners in the Kremlin were listening to the Commissioner's speech, they would be very surprised by her evaluation of EU-Russia relations.

Our approach to the next EU-Russia Summit lacks the courage and sincerity required for a serious treatment of the fundamental questions which today stand between the EU and Russia. If there is no sincerity within the EU, if, only a few days after final ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Czech Republic, words about energy solidarity have no meaning, and further steps are taken towards building the northern gas pipeline; if, in our relations, there is no serious treatment of the Energy Charter or the Sarkozy Plan, or of the recent Russian military manoeuvres on Poland's eastern border, we will not achieve anything.

I would like to hear something from the Commissioner, and please tell us sincerely: which elements of EU-Russia relations do you consider to be your personal success? Where do we have the opportunity for success in this area? Without sincerity, we will not build anything.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, the war in Georgia, the gas dispute and the inability of the European Union to agree on a reasonably unified line to take with regard to Russia have left their mark.

At the same time, Russia is, without a doubt, an important strategic partner for Europe, and not only in terms of energy supply. We will soon see whether the new memorandum to prevent energy crises and the European early warning system are worth the paper they are written on – at least we will when the next gas dispute arises. The fact is that our dependence on Russian gas cannot be eliminated easily and even the Nabucco project will barely make a difference to this situation. It would be naive to believe that Tehran would not be able to put pressure on Europe.

I believe that the European Union must pursue a sensible and realistic policy towards Russia. It needs to find the balance between European and Russian interests and also show respect for Russia's historical sensitivities with regard to geopolitical matters. Otherwise, we may soon not only have to worry about a bilateral ice age, but also about citizens freezing in Europe on account of the gas dispute.

**Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE).** – (LT) I support Mr Zalewski's position, to be precise, Amendment No 1, since it draws serious attention to two questions that are crucial for the European Union. Firstly, we do not approve of the way the third country arrogantly ignores and rejects the EU as its equal and respected partner in matters of external energy security that are important to the European Union. Secondly, we do not approve of the anti-European dividing line, which of course, the third country is implementing in the 'Nord Stream' gas pipeline project. We must oppose the lobbyist and, at times, corrupt division of Europe, and must not condone Russia's arrogance towards us, by which I mean the European Parliament. We cannot allow Gazprom – the principal 'Nord Stream' shareholder – to completely ignore our Parliament's resolution on the threats the gas pipeline poses to the environment.

The problem is not simply the tragic ecological state of the Baltic Sea, but also our institution's moral condition. When we voted here last year, we demanded that an evaluation of the impact on the environment be carried out, one that is independent and not bought in advance, and that guarantees be given to nations on the shores of the Baltic should there be a disaster. Gazprom did not even bother to answer Europe. That is like spitting in Parliament's face and we cannot respond by saying 'Yes, sir, great pleasure'. We must behave with dignity and honour without manipulating or blocking the special debates currently initiated by MEPs on problems concerning Baltic Sea life. If, struck by fear, we agree to the murdering of the Baltic and a new Moscow–Berlin border in the sea with Russian Naval vessels protecting the pipeline, we will bury our free future. Indeed, while chatting about energy, we are selling our future.

**Hannes Swoboda (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, indeed, we must take Russia seriously, as Mr Kowal said, in particular, after the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, with regard to which it is interesting that the President who long refused to sign the treaty, Václav Klaus, has taken a particularly uncritical stance towards Russia. Taking Russia seriously means developing a sensible relationship and a pragmatic economic relationship with Russia, but it does not mean that we should not be critical of political developments within Russia, particularly with regard to human rights issues.

It was with great regret that we discovered what happened during the last elections, that things were clearly not quite as they should have been. We are, of course, particularly concerned about the attacks on human rights defenders. I do not want to lay the blame for these attacks at the door of the Russian Government. What I do want, and what we demand in this resolution, which is a very balanced one, is for Russia to take

the protection of these human rights defenders seriously. That is not happening, at least not to a sufficient degree. In this regard, we should focus more on President Medvedev than Prime Minister Putin. The differences may not be very large, but if either has taken a reasonably enlightened, positive stance, it is surely President Medvedev, and we should strengthen and support him in that.

As regards the energy issue: here, too, we need to cultivate a very calm, reasonable relationship. I have nothing against Nord Stream, or against South Stream, but I do not want to be dependent on anyone, not on any one country, for our gas supply. I am therefore very much in favour of the Nabucco pipeline. Multiplicity, diversification – that is the crucial factor in gas supply connection, whether it comes via a different pipeline, like Nabucco, or via LNG ports. This is not because the country in question is Russia, but because Europe should not be dependent on anyone.

If we now bring Ukraine into the mix, I would like to see Ukrainian politicians accepting their full responsibility and making the investments that have been agreed with Europe. I know that Russia often exploits the situation, but if Ukraine fulfils its promises, then Russia will not be able to exploit the situation, because the investments in question will have been made in Ukraine.

**Elena Băsescu (PPE).** – (RO) I wish to congratulate the authors of the resolution for harmonising the points of view of the various political groups. The Stockholm Summit offers a good opportunity to demonstrate to our Member States that we can be united. Although we speak 23 languages, we can express ourselves with a single voice when it comes to defending our economic, political and energy interests.

The European Union must devote particular attention to energy security, both by ensuring constant supplies from Russia and by developing alternative projects, such as Nabucco and the pan-European Constanța – Trieste oil pipeline.

For us Romanians, energy security means security in the Black Sea region. Europe's energy policy may be affected by unresolved conflicts in this region.

At the same time, we need to replace the mindset based on spheres of influence with one based on spheres of trust. Russia must cooperate with the European Union in this region of maximum interest. The progress of certain projects of vital interest to the European Union's development also depends on energy security.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** – (HU) Madam President, we greatly need to establish a new partnership and cooperation between the EU and Russia. However, this is currently being restricted by an historical debate between several EU Member States and Russia. Relations between the European Union and Russia cannot be held hostage to these historical debates.

We are mutually dependent in the energy sector, as was also mentioned by Hannes Swoboda. In the energy sector, it would be an important development for the European Union and Russia to reach agreement after withdrawing from the Energy Charter. It would also be important in terms of setting up an energy hotline, so that the Central European Member States do not suffer the fallout from the arguments between Russia and Ukraine.

Finally, we are fully entitled to condemn the violation of the rule of law and human rights in Russia. However, attention must also be drawn to those rights violations such as the denial of citizenship to 400 000 Russians living in Latvia, highlighting that the European Union still has plenty to do in its own backyard.

**Ivo Vajgl (ALDE).** – (SL) I support the approach taken by Mrs Malmström and Mrs Ferrero-Waldner. With such an agenda in place, I think that the dialogue between Russia and the European Union will prove to be advantageous to both parties.

It has been a solemn day for us here today: we have commemorated the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, what we failed to recall is that, at the same time, another important wall collapsed in Russia, and that the process of transition, which is still in progress, began. Today, Russia is a better country than it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall and sometimes we need to remind ourselves of that. Sometimes we should give Russia, our important partner, credit for that and not allow ourselves to be carried away solely by the emotions aroused by our own history.

We need Russia as a global partner in world politics and as a partner in relations between the European Union and Russia. However, this does not mean, as other members have suggested, us abandoning our fundamental values. I have no time for that kind of talk.

**Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR).** – (PL) Madam President, I would like, above all, to say something to Mrs Ferrero-Waldner. You may not have been present this afternoon, when President Havel spoke. Like Mrs Ojuland and Mr Schulz, I would like to refer to President Havel's statement about the European Union's obligation to spread democracy and respect for human rights.

Mrs Malmström also referred to this, for which I thank her. You spoke as if the European Union were preparing for a summit with Switzerland. You spoke about trade, about business, about the climate package, and completely forgot about significant matters, about what is perhaps most significant for the European Union. My wish for you, for us and, above all, for the citizens of the Russian Federation, is that the EU will more often present the position outlined today by Mrs Malmström rather than the one you presented.

**Andrew Henry William Brons (NI).** – Madam President, before we criticise Russia for human rights abuses, we should look at similar abuses even within the European Union: countries in which opposition parties are physically attacked, such as Hungary, or attacked by the militia of the ruling party, such as even the United Kingdom, or countries that lock people up for non-violent dissent or ban political parties, like Belgium.

We must conduct relations with Russia on the basis of the interests of our own Member States and not on hypocritical outbursts.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Madam President, thank you for a very constructive debate. I think that most of us agree that Russia is a strategic partner for the EU and that our relations with this country are important. It needs to be a partnership based on respect for one another, for our common commitments and also for the values that the European Union stands for when it comes to human rights, democracy and the principle of the rule of law.

In this regard, we need to be very clear and I believe that those who have criticised me, Mrs Rosbach for example, probably did not listen to my introductory speech, because I said very clearly then that we are concerned about developments in relation to human rights in Russia. Russia is an important neighbour. We do, of course, have many unresolved issues and perhaps none of us believes that we will resolve all of the issues at the summit in Stockholm. However, it is a valuable opportunity to meet and to talk.

We have common issues in which we will perhaps be able to get a little closer to a solution. There is the question of the Middle East and Afghanistan, and at the moment, of course, the climate summit in Copenhagen is very relevant. Then there is the financial and economic crisis and our common commitments in this regard, as well as our relations with regard to energy, accession to the WTO and various issues relating to foreign and security policy. We need to cooperate with regard to conflict settlement in our common space. It is about identifying specific issues where both parties will benefit from cooperation. We must do this in a correct and respectful way, without abandoning our values.

I hope that the summit will also help to strengthen our strategic partnership and open the way for constructive cooperation between us. That would be a positive thing. I have read the resolution that many of you referred to and that I understand you will vote on tomorrow. I think it is an extremely good resolution and I also think it is excellent that there is, on the whole, a high level of consensus in the Commission, as well as in the Council and the European Parliament, on these matters.

Like so many of you have said, we need to speak with one voice when we talk to Russia. If we are in agreement, and if we have a clear and constructive dialogue, it will be good for Russia, it will be good for the EU and it will be good for many pertinent issues in the European and the global arena.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Member of the Commission.** – Madam President, Russia is a strategic partner on the one hand but also a neighbour, and as a neighbour, it is more complicated. However, especially at a time of economic uncertainty, I think it is all the more important to ensure that the relationship between Europe and Russia works as effectively as possible to deliver security, stability and prosperity for our citizens and also for Russia's citizens. We must therefore redouble our efforts to find common ground on issues where our views differ – for instance on human rights questions or on questions on the common neighbourhood – but also to keep the door open for dialogue and debate that respects our differences but also respects our common commitments. This is, so to say, the general line.

Now let me say a few very specific things. Russia's WTO accession is, and remains, a key objective for us. In so saying, it is time to resolve several issues that remain outstanding in this trade relationship. Some of these, such as the Transnistrian overflight charges, have been on our agenda for many years. They have always been mentioned at the many summits I have been on. Others, such as the proposed decree limiting the

transport of containers by road, are more recent, and I personally – and all the Commission services – raise these issues whenever we talk to Russia. Indeed, we just had a permanent partnership council, but of course, we could again do so.

The second item I want to mention is energy. The European Union and Russia are, as I said, also important partners in the energy field. The relation is one of interdependence, which offers both sides a strong motivation to put our energy relations on a predictable and also on a concrete basis. Ensuring an unhindered and uninterrupted energy supply to the European Union, thus preventing and overcoming emergency situations, is therefore of the utmost importance. This is what we aim to achieve with, for instance, the Early Warning Mechanism on which we are working and where it is important that we work with the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation. We have discussed this issue and I do hope that we can move on.

On Ukraine and, especially, the transit of gas, we at the Commission have been working with the Ukrainian authorities, but also with the international financial institutions, on a loan package that would address both payment difficulties for the storage of gas from Russia and the reform and modernisation of the Ukrainian gas sector.

An agreement was reached at the end of July, thus paving the way for financial assistance by the international financial institutions based on the implementation of a number of conditionalities. We hope that it will really work, and we also have to make sure that there is a very clear and transparent legal basis for the energy relationship. This is what we are aiming for, particularly in our new agreement.

With regard to human rights, I did speak about human rights. We have spoken about human rights whenever we have been at the summit. I would like to say a few words on the death penalty, because this is, of course, not acceptable for us according to our community of values. Yes, the constitutional court in Russia is debating this issue at the moment, but we were told that there are indications that the court will conclude that Russia is bound by its signature of Protocol 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights and thus, will most probably not apply the death penalty. Let us hope that this will indeed be true.

As I mentioned before, Russia itself has, as a member of the UN, as a member of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, entered into very important commitments on human rights. These are always discussed in our EU-Russia human rights consultations. As these just took place in Stockholm on 5 November, I did not go into any details, but everybody who is informed knows about that.

My last point is indeed a positive one: youth cooperation in science and technology. Yes, as Mr Fleckenstein mentioned, stimulating exchanges and cooperation between young people from the European Union and from Russia is a key concern for us and we are making our programmes available for this purpose. These have proven beneficial within the European Union itself, for instance, TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus, and this is also an avenue we should continue to explore.

In this context again, we are launching the negotiation of Russia's association to the European Community Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development. That is also an area of enormous economic potential.

I think again that the scope of our relationship is enormous. There is a lot to be discussed and we do not always see eye to eye with Russia, but we can always debate on every issue, and this is what we do.

**President.** – I have received six motions for resolutions<sup>(2)</sup> tabled in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow, Thursday 12 November 2009.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing.** – (RO) At the onset of winter, Europe is being threatened by a gas crisis similar to that at the start of this year when dependency on Russian gas was more apparent than ever. There is likely to be a repeat this year too of the scenario which unfolded last winter, which Prime Minister Putin recently drew attention to, again based on a misunderstanding with Ukraine. In this context, the alternative to Russian gas, the Nabucco project, becomes an absolute necessity. Gas supplies to

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(2) See Minutes



Europe cannot depend on conflicts between Russia and Ukraine. It is becoming imperative for all EU organisations to make Nabucco a priority, just as the European Council also actually decided in March. The EU must speak with a single voice on the Nabucco project. It is in Russia's interest to have access to Caspian gas, and a resolute, united front from Europe would bring Russia to the same negotiating table. We are not getting involved with competition between projects. We are not talking about Nord Stream versus South Stream. What we are talking about is the shared interest in ensuring an alternative source of gas. Last but not least, European institutions must make a strong appeal to Russia and Ukraine not to let feelings of pride dictated by geopolitical or electoral interests affect the security of the EU's population and economies.

**András Gyürk (PPE), in writing. – (HU)** The renegotiation of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement provides a good opportunity for both sides to review the issues which most clearly define their relations. In the wake of the events of the last few years, it is no coincidence that the agenda for the negotiations reflects the growing role of energy exchanges. Judging from the press, we can by no means be sure that this year we will escape the gas crisis, which is becoming a regular fixture. The EU Gas Supply Directive, which has not yet been adopted, will not be worth anything, unfortunately, if EU Member States once again wake up to shut-off taps. This is precisely why the EU must endeavour to make the basic principles of the Energy Charter, still to be ratified by Russia, an integral part of the new cooperation agreement. At present, both the issue of energy transit and market accessibility are fraught with contradictions. Indeed, as long as Russia, taking advantage of the market's openness, is still involved as an investor in most EU Member States, it will consistently close off its own market to Western companies. The Energy Charter may resolve this contradiction. Recording market principles in writing may provide a good basis during the negotiation of future long-term gas supply contracts as well. If they fail to establish transparent relations, it will still be possible to play off Member States against one another in the future as they continue to pay different prices for gas supplies.

**Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE), in writing. –** Madam President, in Russia today, we are seeing the harassment of civil society by the authorities. Organisations whose sole role is to help protect basic civic freedoms and human rights are being driven out by eviction notices, refusal of administrative permits and, in some places in Russia, the murder of their members.

We have just this week read reports that the For Human Rights centre, and the Moscow Helsinki Group, the oldest human rights organisation in Russia, are to be expelled from their premises.

As we, the European Parliament, are about to present this year's Sakharov Prize to the 'Memorial' Foundation, including to one of the founders of the Moscow Helsinki Group, Mrs Lyudmila Mikhailovna Alexeyeva, we must underline that this Parliament, this Union, is more than just about business and making sure that gas arrives as cheaply as possible. We are a union of values, including those of civil liberties, democracy, human rights and human dignity. Next week, our European leaders during the summit need to speak about more than pipelines and free trade. It is not yet time to let the candle of Russian civil society burn out. Thank you

**Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), in writing. – (PL)** It is very important for us to have good relations and a good partnership with Russia. At the same time, efforts are being made at developing the Eastern Partnership, which aims to activate EU relations with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Despite the many declarations made by the European Union and by Poland about cooperation with the Russian Federation, my concern is aroused by the fact that in September, thousands of Russian soldiers took part in military exercises named 'West 2009' in Belarus. The objective of these exercises was to put down a fictitious rising of the Polish ethnic minority. The holding of joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises on the assumption that the aggressor is one of the Member States of the European Union is extremely disturbing. In addition, it surprises me that there has been no reaction to this from the European Commission or from the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. I hope this subject will be raised during the forthcoming European Union-Russia Summit, which will be held in Stockholm on 18 November.

## 17. Implementation of the Services Directive (debate)

**President. –** The next item is the debate on

- the oral question to the Council on implementation of Directive 2006/123/EC, by Malcolm Harbour, Andreas Schwab, Evelyne Gebhardt, Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Heide Rühle, Adam Bielan, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides and Matteo Salvini, on behalf of the IMCO Committee (O-0107/2009 – B7-0216/2009), and

- the oral question to the Commission on implementation of Directive 2006/123/EC, by Malcolm Harbour, Andreas Schwab, Evelyne Gebhardt, Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Heide Rühle, Adam Bielan, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides and Matteo Salvini, on behalf of the IMCO Committee (O-0114/2009 – B7-0219/2009).

**Malcolm Harbour, author.** – Madam President, it is a privilege to be able to make my first intervention in the Chamber since being elected as chairman of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and to present this question on behalf of all the political groups on the committee as well as the coordinators. I am very pleased that many new members of the committee are here tonight to support me and to contribute to the debate.

I do not think that this House needs any reminding about the importance of the Services Directive. In unleashing the power of the single market in a sector that comprises probably 70% of the European economy, the jobs that it will create, and the dynamic effect of that, are sorely needed at the moment in the stagnant conditions that we face.

This is a very wide-ranging directive. It has many new features. It is complicated in many areas. It has needed a lot of attention. The transposition of this, in a consistent and full way, is absolutely vital for its effective operation. At the very core of this directive is the fact that Member States will remove barriers to business and, in particular, measures in their own national legislation that discriminate against service companies who want to do business. Believe me, there are literally hundreds of legislative proposals or pieces of legislation in different countries that have had to be amended as a result of this proposal. Unless all colleagues move together to do this, and all countries move together to do this, that discrimination is going to remain. This has to be done consistently. Otherwise, those barriers will remain.

That is why I want first of all to pay tribute particularly to the Commission for the leading role it has played in managing and coordinating the whole process among Member States of carrying out and transposing this legislation. I also want to thank the Council and, indeed, successive Councils, since this proposal was agreed back in 2006, who have led the process which we have actually seen in summits calling for the consistent transposition of this directive.

I want to say particularly to Cecilia Malmström, the Minister here tonight, how impressed the committee was with the work that Sweden was doing when we went to visit Sweden on a mission back in September. I think that they have clearly set an example to many other people and, in particular, in the meticulous way in which they are ensuring that public authorities at all levels in Sweden understand their obligations under European law in order to be able to authorise service companies coming from other places within the European Union.

Our question tonight focuses, in particular, on what we regard as the most important elements to be put in place as soon as possible. Member States have been required to go through the screening process of their legislation to look, as I say, for those discriminatory elements. But the transposition on 28 December is just the start of the process of removing obstacles, because every country is now going to come up with a list of proposals which discriminate against other countries and which, they believe, they can justify in the public interest. That mutual evaluation process – which is an entirely new one – requires other Member State authorities to look at each other, at each other's discriminatory proposals. That is going to be a vital part that starts, and we are following that with great interest. We would like to hear tonight how the Commission is proposing to approach that process. We would like to know from the Council what support they are giving to that. We would also like an assurance that this is not going to be a process done behind closed doors, because consumers and businesses and other interest groups will want to know how that process is being carried out. We want to see that list. We want to see the list of regulations and internal statutes that Member States want to retain.

Second is information and access to procedures through electronic technology. Setting up the points of single contact for business is a ground-breaking proposal, again, in any European directive. Member States are required to make that information and access to the procedures necessary for businesses to complete to allow them to trade through those systems. It is vital that we have full and complete systems set up.

So that is what our question is here tonight. We look forward to Mrs Ferrero-Waldner – perhaps in a field that is not so familiar to her – giving us some comprehensive answers. We know you will give our best wishes to Charlie McCreevy from everybody.

I think it is important to understand, however, the perspective of my committee. For us, this is also the start of a process over the next five years of monitoring and sustaining political interest and pressure on all the

Member States to deliver this directive. I have to say to Cecilia Malmström that it was disappointing, to say the least, to see in the report that a Competitiveness Council discussed back in September a note from the Commission that, it would appear, in some Member States the political commitment to full and timely implementation has unfortunately not been translated into appropriate action. That is not good enough. We want the benefits and we want them now.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Madam President, I would like to thank Mr Harbour and the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection for raising this important issue. Just as Mr Harbour said, the free movement of services is one of the cornerstones of the internal market. It accounts for 60-70% of the EU's economy and employment and it is growing. It will play a very important part in the EU's economic growth, but as has also been pointed out, the free movement of services has not worked as well as it should have done. There is still much to be done to remove barriers to trade and to facilitate the trade in services, and it is excellent therefore that we now have the Services Directive, which is to be transposed by 28 December.

The Commission is ultimately responsible for the Member States doing what they are supposed to do and I am sure that the Commission will talk about this, but I will nevertheless say a few words on behalf of the Presidency on the basis of the question that has been put to me by the committee. The first thing I would like to say is about the screening of legislation and how it has contributed to the implementation. The purpose of this is to identify and eliminate barriers to the freedom of establishment and the free movement of services. The requirements relating to the provision of services that the Member States retain must comply with the requirements for non-discrimination, necessity and proportionality.

This is a huge task, but when it is finished, the service sector will benefit from a reduction in the administrative burden for companies providing services. The final report to the Commission on this should be ready on 28 December.

The national points of contact are to gather information concerning rights and requirements in the services sector for service providers and the recipients of services. They are to give service providers the opportunity to apply for authorisation online and to communicate with the authorisation authority. Of course, this is quite difficult for the Member States to organise. It is based on the idea of us having a more modern system with a high degree of e-governance. Next week, the Swedish Presidency is holding a ministerial meeting in Malmö on precisely the subject of e-governance. At this meeting, the Member States will receive support from the Commission and a lot of seminars will be held to enable us to learn from one another so that we can make user-friendliness the main focus.

Another important issue is the language used on the web portals and the option of being able to use this facility in a language other than the Member States' own. This is not a requirement in the directive, but hopefully most Member States will have information in several languages at the points of contact. This will give service providers a better opportunity to compare different markets and obtain the overview needed to be able to expand their operations.

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection asks whether the Member States will be able to implement the directive in time, and I hope that they will be able to. The Commission will have to answer this, but in fact, in the Competitiveness Council, all Member States stated that they would be ready in time. Political support for this is, of course, very important.

What are the biggest challenges, then? The directive as a whole is, of course, extremely wide-ranging and it requires a number of measures to be taken by the Member States, not only in terms of legislation, but also various measures to facilitate cooperation. These structures that we will hopefully have in place will make governance more efficient and more up-to-date. However, it will take time to put this in place. Screening the legislation in this huge area and finding legislative solutions cannot be accomplished overnight. Authorities will need to be trained with regard to their new duties, and this will require resources.

So the answer to the question of what the biggest challenges are is, of course, the setting up of the points of single contact and ensuring that they work. Lastly, Parliament asks how the interested stakeholders have been involved. This is an important question, because it is, of course, a fundamental part of the process for the various stakeholder organisations to be involved in creating an understanding of the Services Directive, communicating the advantages to citizens and companies, but also discovering their views and needs.

This dialogue has been a key element. Many interested stakeholders were already involved in reference groups during the negotiation period and in many cases, these networks have continued. In many countries, there

has been broad social consultation on the proposals for implementation in order to obtain various pieces of information and views.

Finally, Madam President, I would like to thank Parliament for the interest it is showing in the process of implementing the Services Directive. In view of the very important role that the European Parliament played in reaching an agreement, it is good that you remain interested and are checking and ensuring that we are doing what we are supposed to do in the Member States. We agree that it is especially important for the directive to be put in place promptly and in the correct way, and, particularly now during the economic crisis, the Services Directive will be an important tool to take us out of the crisis and allow us once again to concentrate on economic growth and, hopefully, to create jobs.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I would like to thank the European Parliament for putting forward this timely oral question, particularly also on behalf of my colleague, Charlie McCreevy, on the state of the implementation of the Services Directive.

It is a little less than two months before the implementation deadline, and it is a good time to look back on the work that has been done so far and to take stock of where things are today.

The Services Directive is one of the most important initiatives adopted in recent years. It has a great potential to remove barriers to trade in the internal market and to modernise our public administrations, and proper implementation becomes even more pressing in the current economic context. We know that very well and the European Parliament, and in particular, its Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, have not only played a key role in making its adoption possible but the Commission also particularly appreciated your continued interest in monitoring the work done by the Member States to implement the directive.

For our part, the Commission has delivered on its commitment to facilitate the implementation process. This was already mentioned. We have taken Member States' requests for technical assistance seriously and we have deployed unprecedented efforts and resources to support their work. More than 80 bilateral meetings with all the Member States were held and expert groups met in Brussels over 30 times during the last three years.

But the Commission cannot carry out the implementation at national level. This is the role of Member States, and transposing the Services Directive has been a challenging task for them.

It has been challenging because it involved the carrying out of several large-scale projects, such as the setting-up of 'points of single contact' and the review and simplification of legislation relating to services. It has been challenging also because it involved intensive coordination between all levels of the administration, be it at national, regional or local level.

So where do things stand today? And will Member States deliver?

Just over half of Member States seem to be in a position to achieve the implementation of the Services Directive by the end of 2009 deadline or in the beginning of 2010. Some Member States might be late. This is not entirely satisfactory, in particular, for citizens and businesses wanting to make use of their rights in the internal market. Although the situation is not unusual compared to other internal market directives, it gives some reason for concern.

But it must also be taken into account that, perhaps more than for any other directive, Member States needed to address a huge amount of difficult legal and practical issues. And given this, the result that we hope to achieve by the beginning of next year may actually be considered as quite good.

Let me now reply in more detail to your question.

So, almost all Member States have completed the process of 'screening' their national legislation. Some are still working on it. The extent to which the screening has contributed to an effective transposition of the directive is, of course, also somewhat difficult to assess at this stage. The transposition deadline has not yet expired, and Member States have not yet submitted their legislative changes to the Commission.

But it is clear that an ambitious and thorough process of screening is crucial to ensure the 'internal market friendliness' of national legislation in each and every Member State. And it is also crucial for the competitiveness of our services sector in general.

As regards the points of single contact, it seems clear that most Member States will at least have basic, practical, point-of-single-contact solutions in place by the end of 2009. These will, again, not be totally perfect, but they should form a solid basis. Member States should continue developing and upgrading the points of single contact which, in the long run, should become fully-fledged e-government centres.

In this context, the Commission agrees with the importance of providing additional information and procedures through the points of single contact, such as those related to workers rights and taxation. Businesses and consumers need to be aware of the applicable rules. But as you know, this is not mandatory under the directive.

We expect, as the points of single contact consolidate and develop, this information will also be provided. Indeed, some Member States are already planning to do so.

As regards the implementation of the directive in the area of social services – to the extent that they are covered by it – this does not seem to have raised particular problems. The directive itself contains mechanisms to ensure the specificities of these services are taken into account.

Finally, I think it is clear that stakeholders have played a vital role throughout the implementation process. They have followed Member States' efforts closely and have been involved in implementation in different ways, and we will ensure that stakeholders are consulted next year during the evaluation of the results of the implementation.

So we need to find a method to ensure that this consultation is targeted and very concrete.

Finally, many Member States have had open consultation on the draft implementing legislation during the legislative process. Some stakeholder organisations have even organised regular surveys with their members on the state of implementation. Let us say it is important to be realistic and honest at this stage of the process. A lot still remains to be done in the area of implementation, and those Member States who are behind schedule need to make extra efforts.

I remain convinced, however, that the glass is more than half full. But we had better keep filling it and quickly.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR SCHMITT

*Vice-President*

**Andreas Schwab**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, what we have just heard from the Commission and the Council is somewhat discouraging.

Europe faces international competition, global competition, in which European service providers also need to find their place and be successful. If we look at the history of this directive, which started life in Parliament with a significant level of participation by the Members, it is, in my view, rather discouraging to hear that the glass is half full, or half empty, as Mrs Ferrero-Waldner said. President-in-Office of the Council, Parliament has not only played a role in the past, but intends to fulfil its role in future, too. We have therefore decided, within the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, to address this question to you in good time before the transposition deadline in order to check whether you, as the Member States of the European Union, have undertaken your obligations, which were originally proposed by you, to transpose this directive by the end of this year, and whether you are able to meet this target. At least as far as the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) is concerned, I am still assuming that you will do everything you can to fulfil your claim in the coming months.

We will appraise the directive and its implementation from the point of view of the citizens of Europe, the service providers and the workers, and against this background we will examine closely how the Member States behave towards one another and the level of transparency – as mentioned by the Chairman – with which the exchange of views over the elements of the directive is carried out and how effectively the Member States' regulations are screened for their suitability for the internal market as far as service providers are concerned. The same applies to the scope of the directive. Here, too, as we have done in the past, we will observe closely the degree to which the European Court of Justice might interpret the EU Treaty so as to give priority to the rights of citizens and that – as we sometimes get the impression happens in the Council – the interests of the Member States do not always take priority.

Secondly, we are very pleased about the point you mentioned with regard to the electronic management of the process, but the key issue in our view is whether service providers can ultimately carry out all the tasks

required under the procedure in a simple and effective way using the online process and whether, behind these many home pages, they will actually find people they can talk to about the matter and about the requirements in the Member States, or whether we are not simply constructing walls and barriers here.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President is asking me to be quick. I would like to come to my last point. In the previous debate, Parliament called, in particular, for the Internal Market Information System to remove all the problems that the administrations of the Member States may reasonably experience in connection with the transposition of the directive, and I therefore hope, Mrs Malmström, that you will make every effort to ensure that this directive can enter into force on 31 December this year.

**Evelyne Gebhardt**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, I am grateful that we are able to debate this topic today, as it is such an important one. I would like to make one thing absolutely clear: as Parliament, we have not merely played a part, but we have ensured that, in this Services Directive, a very positive, constructive compromise was found. This compromise is based, in particular, on guaranteeing labour and social rights and on the particular regard for and removal of the services of general economic interest. That was the reason why a Services Directive was possible in the first place.

However, there are a few things than I am not sure about in this regard, and the questions that we raised have not been answered. It would, for example, be very disappointing if what I have heard from various sources turned out to be true, namely, that some Member States are using the transposition of the Services Directive to destroy the balance that we, as legislators, have found by not fully respecting the rights of workers as we envisaged in the Services Directive. This relates not only to the working conditions, which are being called into question, but in many Member States, the definitions are also being re-written or made more restrictive. There are also Member States which, with feeble justifications, are not removing the social services from amongst the services to which this transposition relates.

In this respect, the European Commission's Handbook was not very helpful, because the guidelines that it gave were partly wrong and it provided an interpretation that was, in our opinion, incorrect. The examples that I have given show how important it is for us also to create a legal framework for services of general economic interest, so that social rights, such as labour rights, can also be fully and completely respected once again. Anything else would not be sufficient.

I would also like to ask the Member States to what extent they have involved the stakeholders and, in particular, the trade unions and the social services, in the transposition. This is a question that we raised, but to which I have not heard an answer, and I would very much like a good answer to this question.

**Jürgen Creutzmann**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Commission's response is, of course, not only discouraging, as Mr Schwab said, but also very disappointing. When it comes to the transposition, we need to realise that if you say that around 50% are on schedule, then we have to assume that the other 50% are a long way from achieving that.

Take my own country, Germany, for example: the individual Federal *Länder* are currently transposing this directive. In Rhineland-Palatinate, where I live, I had the opportunity, on 2 September, to participate in the first reading for the transposition of the Services Directive for this Federal *Land*. As you can imagine, it will be impossible to achieve the transposition on time, and I believe that the other Federal *Länder* are in a similar position.

The crucial factor for us, of course, will be how the transposition is carried out. If Article 13(2) stipulates that 'authorisation procedures and formalities shall not be dissuasive and shall not unduly complicate or delay the provision of the service' then we must take great care to ensure that this does not happen in practice. A decisive factor, for example, will be how the single points of contact are equipped. Will they have language skills? Will they work closely enough with the administrations to also be able to deal with the concerns put to them? We very much doubt it. In fact, the committee should now be asking which countries are behind schedule with this, which countries make up the 50% and when do they expect to achieve this. It would then be better to create a moratorium, or something similar, for these countries.

I am certain that, in most countries, this directive will not be transposed by 1 January 2010, even though these countries have had more than four years to do this. That is a major problem and it is very disappointing.

**Tadeusz Cymański**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, in the discussion which is under way, I would like to ask about the effect of the crisis on implementation of the directive in EU countries.

In my country, Poland, despite the crisis and difficulties with transposition, it has been possible to draft a law on services which is based on a high degree of liberalisation in registering and running a business. In sectors such as crafts, trade, tourism and hotels, the restrictions are only exceptions. We are doing this in the name of equal opportunities and protection of the principle of healthy competition.

The compromise of 2006 assumed that certain areas would be excluded from regulation of the directive. I would like to ask what the evaluation of those decisions looks like today. It was assumed then that in the future, further legislative work would be undertaken on the question of public utility services. Keeping to the metaphor used by the Commissioner, after filling the glass which is already half-full, will there be another, and what will happen next?

**Eva-Britt Svensson, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.** – (SV) Mr President, in the compromise reached in 2006, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament withdrew demands for social considerations to be given priority over the freedom of companies that provide services. Otherwise, as Mr Harbour wrote in a press release, it would not have been a compromise. The term ‘country of origin principle’ has been deleted, but it has been replaced by a conflict of laws regulation from the Commission that clearly states that, in the event of a conflict between the labour market laws of different Member States, the law of the country of origin of the company shall apply.

The directive could have been interpreted as meaning that the EU would not interfere in national labour law. However, the Commission quickly drew up guidelines stating that companies providing services do not need to have a permanent representative in the country in which the work is carried out, and therefore the trade union has no counterpart with which to negotiate. The Vaxholm ruling also clearly stated that Swedish labour law is subordinate to EC law, which meant that Sweden was forced to reduce the standard of its labour law legislation. I, and the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left, can see no alternative for workers rights other than for us to provide a clear legal protocol in the treaty in which union rights take precedence over market freedoms.

**Lara Comi (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost, the Services Directive represents the end of a journey for Europe, a journey of which the final destination is precisely the completion of the internal market so as to facilitate trade within the European Union, and to thus enable the authorities to coordinate their efforts and, above all, to minimise the transaction costs between the different operations within the different sectors and the different Member States.

Harmonising the contents of the various administrative procedures and making it easier for service providers to operate in other Member States automatically means increasing growth and therefore also stimulating growth in a period of exceptional crisis such as this. The Services Directive, adopted by the European Parliament and by the Council on 12 December 2006, is an intrinsic part of the Lisbon Strategy, which has been revised over time and adapted to the various situations that Europe has experienced over the last nine years, and its main objective absolutely must be to make the European economy the world’s most competitive economy, but also a knowledge-based economy.

The economic crisis that we are going through and that the European Union is tackling at institutional level, skilfully reconciling the various measures taken with the individual Member States too, requires the Services Directive to be applied even more correctly and more swiftly than was necessary when it was first adopted. The deadline of 28 December 2009 for the transposition of the Services Directive is therefore not only an indication of the date set for moving on, of course, from the ratification to the legislative process of this directive, but also, and above all, it represents an important step towards a Europe that is increasingly aware of its resources and, more specifically, that is increasingly capable of getting the best out of those resources.

**Bernadette Vergnaud (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, Minister, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, since its adoption and the heated debates that surrounded it, the Services Directive has somewhat faded into obscurity, but it is important to show that we are particularly vigilant in the crucial phase of its transposition.

I question the interpretation of the provisions of Article 2 of the directive linked to the exclusion of social services from its scope. Notions such as ‘support for persons in need’ and ‘mandated providers’ seem restrictive when compared with the definition of social services used in certain Member States, and I am concerned that a deliberately strict interpretation may serve to justify the inclusion of whole swathes of these services in the scope of the directive.

The exclusion of these services is a key element of the text and a guarantee for the citizens that the European social model will be protected.

I hope that certain Member States, including France, will not take advantage of the transposition in order to liberalise social services, under the false pretext that they are complying with European laws. These problems to do with the integration of services of general interest demonstrate the need to have European legislation that is specific to them and not to stick to a default definition as part of a directive on commercial services.

**Róza, Gräfin von Thun Und Hohenstein (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, proper implementation of the Directive on services in the internal market is important not only for European entrepreneurs operating in that market, but also for consumers. The Services Directive is a good example. A period of three years has been allowed for its implementation. That is a long time, but even so, not all countries will manage to transpose the directive within the three years. This example shows most conspicuously that ideal cooperation between Member States and European institutions is needed in order to achieve transposition in time in all Member States.

Indeed, this is the direction taken in the recommendations issued by the Commission in June this year concerning means for improving the functioning of the internal market. I think that in the implementation process, it is necessary to go a little further. Therefore, in the report concerning the table of results for the internal market, I propose the initiative of organising a forum for the internal market, which would bring together representatives of European institutions, Member States and other interested groups with the aim of achieving a more explicit commitment to transposition, so that we will be able to apply and execute legislation on the internal market, including this extremely important directive. I would like the forum to be a place for the exchange of experience of Member States and EU institutions in the area of transposition. I would like the forum to draw the attention of society to questions concerning the internal market. We must increase our citizens' interest in the functioning of and responsibility for the market. Then we will have achieved complete success.

In connection with the problems which we heard about a moment ago concerning transposition of the Services Directive, I would like to ask if Member States have sought to cooperate with the Commission, and if it can be said that in the implementation process, they have succeeded in applying any of the Commission's recommendations? Does the Commission continue to seek new solutions? Is it making use of all possibilities and means to mobilise and support especially those countries which are experiencing problems with transposition? Are there any new ideas on this matter?

**Louis Grech (S&D).** – (MT) It is worrying that our regular contacts with the local authorities, at least in my country, confirm that many of them are still in the dark as to what awaits them once this directive enters into force. Generally speaking, there is little knowledge as regards the current laws on the four freedoms. There also appears to be a lack of information on anything related to the laws and regulations on financial services, e-communication services and transport services. Furthermore, it seems that the authorities might have problems in simplifying the administrative process and harmonising trade and other licensing regulations. Therefore, the Commission needs to adopt further initiatives so as to provide immediate and direct assistance to local and regional authorities. Moreover, if we really want the implementation process to fully reflect what we agreed upon within Parliament, then it is imperative that the European Parliament remains involved in the process, even after the directive enters into force.

**Bogusław Liberadzki (S&D).** – (PL) Mr President, in conditions of recession we should, as a rule, strive to create new jobs, increase competitiveness, foster price reductions, or, to put it succinctly, increase benefits to the consumer. We are doing this, for example, by subsidising the motor industry. We are talking about such occupations as hairdressers, plumbers and bricklayers, who do not need subsidies. They do need, however, freedom to do their work. Regulations and reality – if only they were in agreement.

I know of the example of a bakery built in a neighbouring country. While it was a question of consent to build it, everything was alright. However, when production started, the government and the local authorities withdrew their consent. Why? The association of local bakers protested. If only this type of practice were never employed.

Commissioner, let us agree also to name the 50% of Member States which do implement the legislation. Which ones are they? I would also like to ask that we receive in January a proposal for precise monitoring of the transposition of this directive in individual Member States.

**Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, I agree with the Commissioner that the Services Directive is one of the most important pieces of legislation passed in recent years, and that its proper implementation is extremely important.



In the previous parliamentary term, I had the opportunity to work on the provisions of the Services Directive. I still remember the huge effort made by all of us here in the European Parliament in drawing up its provisions. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Services Directive and am deeply convinced – and this is something I often stress in meetings with entrepreneurs – that it represents a huge opportunity both for them, and also for the entire economy of Europe.

However, it will be possible to transform the opportunity into specific results only if the appropriate legislation is implemented by Member States appropriately and on time. Therefore, I am joining the appeal for acceleration of the implementation process by national authorities which still have not completed essential work in this area, in particular, on the question of proper implementation of the principle of freedom to offer services and of individual contact points. I follow carefully implementation of the Services Directive in individual countries, as I do also in my own country of Poland, where work on suitable implementation of the directive's provisions is still under way. I hope the outcome of these efforts will be satisfactory.

**Anna Hedh (S&D).** – (SV) Mr President, the Nordic labour market model is based on agreements between the social partners. This type of model does not work if one of the partners, in this case, a service provider, does not have a representative in place with whom negotiations can be carried out. We were therefore very pleased with the decision taken on the Services Directive, which we believe means that the right to negotiate, enter into and apply collective agreements, and to take industrial action in accordance with national legislation and practice, would not be affected.

Nevertheless, during the implementation of the Services Directive in Sweden, a debate arose as to whether or not it is permissible to lay down a requirement for there to be a competent representative of the company. Thus, my question is: does the directive in any way prevent the host country laying down the requirement for the services company to have a representative in place with the mandate to negotiate and enter into agreements?

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL).** – (PT) In the course of this debate, we must not forget the serious implications that transposition of this directive on the liberalisation of services will have in a number of countries, particularly those with highly unstable social situations, further worsening a crisis situation like the one we are experiencing. Even with all the concern shown in the various Member States, unless immediate measures are taken to defend social and workers' rights and to protect the most fragile sectors, including in public service areas, we could have even more serious problems. Liberalisation could increase unemployment, poverty and inequalities among the most vulnerable, and only benefit large service companies and economic groups, particularly in the wealthiest countries.

Therefore, at this time of crisis, one vital measure is to postpone transposition of the directive on the liberalisation of services and to conduct an appropriate study of the potential social implications that implementation of this directive would have.

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – Mr President, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection is to be thanked for highlighting this important issue, the implementation of the Services Directive. In particular, the economic crisis which we are in must not be allowed to be used by countries, entrepreneurs or anybody else to drive us back to protectionism, which would be a disaster in the overall context.

On the broader front, trade in services can be the driving force for economic recovery and, indeed, Ireland has prospered since we engaged in foreign trade. The new crisis would be far worse in Ireland if we did not have the broader base to trade internationally, facilitated by the internal market.

Indeed, opening up our borders to foreign competition has not brought any negative consequences for domestic services. It has, in fact, fostered competition and innovation. So, what has been proposed today is something I support 100%.

Finally, I would just like to say that it was good to hear somebody here say something good about the Irish Commissioner, Charlie McCreevy, who is a friend of mine although he is from a different political grouping.

**Josefa Andrés Barea (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, we are talking about the Services Directive. The aim of this directive was to put into practice the fourth fundamental freedom of the European integration project, since we are today talking of anniversaries. It was adopted three years ago, and now the period given to the Member States in which to adapt their national laws and remove obstacles has come to an end. Now that this period has passed, it is time to assess what state we are now in, who has transposed the legislation and who has not, and under what conditions.

My question, however, is whether the Commission considers that a greater level of harmonisation is required and, if so, whether it is thinking of proposing any legislative initiative in relation to this extremely important Services Directive, seeking to harmonise the market and the rights of consumers, citizens and workers.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, thank you again for raising this very important issue. I think there is general agreement that the Services Directive is very important and that it is really urgent that we try to implement it as soon as possible.

The Swedish Presidency is doing its utmost, as have earlier presidencies, to make sure that this goes smoothly and quickly. We have had several discussions in different Council formations. We have had seminars and discussions on it, and it has been placed on the agenda to encourage real progress on this issue.

However, almost two months remain, and the answer to the question of who is lagging behind may change. There is still time. Our aim is clear – and I know that it is the Commission's aim as well – and it is that all countries should have implemented the directive by 28 December 2009. There might be some delays. We deplore that, of course, but I know that all countries are working as quickly and swiftly as possible.

A question was asked about how the contact points would function. Well, they do not exist yet, but the aim is for them to function in a user-friendly and effective way and to contain all the relevant information that is needed, both by the service suppliers and by consumers. Member States have collaborated with the Commission to supply an information leaflet, available in all languages, to facilitate access for citizens and consumers to the relevant information. Many Member States are also making their own efforts in order to spread information about the directive. There is also an agreement to have a common logo to make it easier for users to navigate between the different websites and the contact points.

Some Member States – although it is not compulsory – will provide information on working rights and labour laws at their contact points. The Services Directive does not cover labour law and the posting of workers is excluded from it. The question put to me by my Swedish colleagues is a Swedish issue. We are looking into that, and it is a little outside this debate. We will be happy to come back to it in a more national context.

The Services Directive is important. It will make life easier for service providers, it will facilitate free movement and will be beneficial for investment, for growth and jobs and it will be very good for the citizens. The citizens look to us to ensure that it is in place as soon as possible because it will facilitate their life. It is our responsibility to make sure that we do our utmost to see this happen.

I would like to thank Parliament again, not only for its contribution in voting on and adopting the Services Directive, but also for acting as a watchdog and continuing to push the Council and the Commission to do what we can in order for it to come into place. But there is still some time remaining and possibly we will come back to this debate next year, under the Spanish Presidency. The Commission will still be watching this very closely.

**Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, as has been said before, we have discussed all the questions surrounding all the different social and other aspects of this directive. I do not think we should reopen this discussion now, but we do have to look to the Member States to see how they have implemented or will implement the directive. On the basis of the already available information, it does seem that a majority of Member States will have completed the implementation either by the end of the year or maybe the beginning of 2010.

So I think one can also say that most Member States will at least have set up the basic single contact point and will therefore be ready to comply with their administrative cooperation agreements and obligations.

In some cases, however, there might be delays as far as the changes in the legal framework are concerned.

With regard to the review process, some Member States have taken the opportunity of the review to simplify laws and procedures and have made a considerable number of changes. Other Member States have enacted only a few amendments, and the number of changes made of course depends on several factors including the existing regulatory framework and also the internal organisation of Member States: in federal states, it is more complicated than for others.

Of course, this also depends on the willingness of a Member State to simplify laws and procedures.

With regard to the question of proper implementation, my colleague, Charlie McCreevy, has, on many occasions, drawn the attention of members of the Member States' governments to the importance of the work on implementation, and he and his staff have followed and monitored the implementation process very closely.

Indeed, as I said before, during the last three years, more than 80 bilateral meetings with all the Member States were held, and expert groups met in Brussels over 30 times. So we have been very active on that. And we will continue to follow Member States' work and will also continue to provide technical assistance if desired by the Member States. But in the end, it is also clearly the Member States' responsibility to do the work and also allocate the necessary resources.

As regards next year, I think it will be crucial to ensure that the process of mutual evaluation provided for in the directive is used in a constructive way. We will also have to assess the quality of implementation of the legislation, as was asked, monitor the functioning of the single contact points and then also get feedback from businesses and from consumers.

Last but not least, we may also need to resort to other enforcement mechanisms – sometimes maybe to infringement cases, but it is too early now to say that.

On the small and medium-sized enterprises, of course, we are of the same opinion as you. They are the backbone of the EU economy and their concerns are at the heart of the Services Directive.

So this directive will benefit all businesses, but SMEs will benefit most, and at the present time, SMEs very often decide to stay at home because of all the legal complexities and also because of the absence of transparent information. Therefore, the Services Directive will do away with many of these complexities and – we all think – give a boost to them.

To the Commission's knowledge, no Member State is using the implementation of the Services Directive to reduce workers' rights. I would like to say that very clearly. Workers' rights as such are not affected or dealt with by the Services Directive. Indeed, this was clearly a result of the practical and political compromise reached by both Parliament and the Council.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that Parliament has been a key partner throughout the history of the Services Directive. Over the past three years, the Commission has found it important to keep you involved in the implementation process and informed about our work with the Member States and, as was mentioned earlier, this will remain a key action to making the internal market work better, to deliver the growth and jobs we need. Proper implementation is therefore the most pressing issue, especially in the current difficult economic crisis.

**President.** – That concludes the item.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing.** – (LT) Europe must be competitive. Thanks to the efforts of the European Parliament, the Services Directive will help implement the hitherto not entirely regulated free movement of services within the European Union's internal market. The Services Directive regulates licensing procedures, indicating prohibited requirements, and confirms that from 2010, all new requirements for service providers must be non-discriminatory, justified by important social interests; it also regulates the principal functions of the point of contact being established. Most importantly, the costs of service provision are reduced at interstate level, and this is particularly important in this period of economic recession. Lithuania is joining the list of Member States that are ready to implement the provisions of the Services Directive on time. Indeed, it is very important for the Commission to cooperate closely and effectively with the Member States, as in some countries, there is a lack of information and insufficient levels of preparedness for the implementation of the directive. At present, only 50% of the Member States are ready to transpose the provisions of the Services Directive into national legislation.

**Edit Herczog (S&D), in writing.** – (HU) Mr President, Member States must fully implement the Services Directive by 28 December 2009, which would, as in the case of goods and products, open up the services market to private individuals and companies.

This directive would help small and medium-sized enterprises to a large extent and promote job creation and economic growth, while taking consumers' interests into account. However, some Member States have decided to restrict employment for citizens from new Member States which joined in 2004 and 2007.

Germany and Austria wish to maintain this restriction until 2011, without any more serious economic and social motive. France and Belgium are applying a similar regulation with regard to Romania and Bulgaria.

However, by now it is clear that the fears personified by the notorious 'Polish plumber' are groundless. The number of Central and East Europeans working in France is far less, for instance, than the number employed in the UK, even though the decision was made by Paris three years ago to gradually remove the restrictions in those professions where there was a labour shortage.

These measures are hindering, to a large extent, the implementation of the Services Directive, one of the basic pillars of which is the complete removal of discrimination on economic and nationality grounds. Twenty years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, which swept away the borders between East and West, we can say that the Services Directive also serves a similar aim. The successful implementation of this directive would finally do away with the false image that has been promoted of the 'Polish plumber'.

**Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (FR) Before any implementation of the directive, the European Parliament should carry out a counter-assessment of the human and social impact of its application by taking account, in particular, of the consequences of the crisis that we are going through. Indeed, everything points to the fact that this directive will result in the European Union's businesses, craftspeople and employees being pitted against one another. Recently, a professional agricultural organisation revealed that the French authorities were proposing that it set up, in the countries of Eastern Europe, employment agencies for agricultural workers who are lower paid and less socially protected than French workers. The transposition of the Services Directive must not lead to the introduction of such practices, which lead to the levelling down of social Europe. Furthermore, we are very concerned about the threats hanging over the services of general interest (SGI) due to the case law of the European Court of Justice. We therefore continue to hope for another European legislative framework that will optimise and develop public services in particular.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), in writing.** – (PL) The Services Directive (2006/123/EC) is characterised by partial liberalisation of the flow of services in the European Union. The objective of bringing such a directive into effect was to release economic potential. The directive has opened up many possibilities, both for consumers and for entrepreneurs. Greater use of the single market has become possible. The main beneficiaries of liberalisation of the market for services include small and medium-sized enterprises, for which the previously existing barriers had caused the greatest difficulties. According to the European Commission, around 70% of the GDP of EU Member States is generated from services. A similar figure is given for the proportion of the workforce engaged in service provision. One of the advantages of bringing the directive into force is the resultant rise in competitiveness in the internal market. Application of this directive has proved to be an opportunity for development of the European economy and has allowed jobs to be created. It should be added that this has achieved one of the aims of the Lisbon Strategy, concerning a rise in the competitiveness of the European economy. In addition, it has brought about an increase in the range of services being offered. The effects which have been achieved are an encouragement to continue work on the further liberalisation of this directive.

## **18. Joint Programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's disease (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Council on

– joint programming of research to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's disease (O-0112/2009 - B7-0218/2009)

The author, Herbert Reul, has indicated that he is running late. If he arrives, he may be given the floor at the end.

**Françoise Grossetête, substitute author.** – (FR) Mr President, in the absence of Mr Reul, I will repeat this question that we are putting to the Commission. In accordance with the legal basis of Article 165 of the treaty, the Council Recommendation on measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases calls for Parliament to be consulted.

We want to know whether the Council can confirm its intention to adopt conclusions on this issue during the Competitiveness Council of 3 December 2009. Moreover, since Parliament was consulted on the Commission's proposal, is the Council prepared to take Parliament's views into account when drafting its conclusions?

Next, regarding possible future joint programming of research activities, can the Council confirm its opinion that these initiatives should, in principle, be adopted using the same legal basis?

I should like to point out that we have drafted a resolution. This resolution has the support of all the political groups and it is important because, quite simply, it highlights the challenges of an ageing population – these challenges that mean that, today, in Europe, we have more than seven million people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, a figure that it is estimated will double over the next 20 years.

It is therefore crucial to plan, invest and cooperate in this area in order to control the social costs of these diseases, and to offer hope, dignity and a healthier life to the millions of sufferers and their families. These health and social problems, which affect the whole of Europe, require coordinated measures designed to ensure the effectiveness of the prevention, diagnoses, treatment and care provided to the people concerned.

Special attention must be paid to support for the research and innovation work carried out by public and private operators in an effort to find new cures and to prevent the development of these diseases. Health research is even more fragmented at European level, and the number of public-private partnerships must be increased. The example of the Innovative Medicines initiative, launched in February 2008, must not remain a one-off experiment.

I shall conclude by saying that this really is a race against the clock, for we must forestall these diseases as much as possible. Research today shows that there are already initiatives aimed at pre-diagnosis. It is on these concrete issues that our fellow citizens are expecting signals from the Europe for health, which must give guarantees and anticipate the development of age-related diseases.

**Cecilia Malmström**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (SV) Mr President, the proposal for a Council Recommendation on measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's, which was adopted by the Commission on 22 July, is based on Article 165 of the treaty. This article talks about coordination of research and technological development activities between the Community and the Member States, precisely to ensure greater consistency between national policies and Community policy.

Article 165 accords with the objectives for joint programming initiatives. These objectives are based on the idea that we jointly establish the challenges that our societies are collectively facing and that, through increased political commitment on the part of the Member States, we can agree on joint or coordinated responses to these challenges. The aim, of course, is to increase efficiency in the public financing of research in Europe.

However, I believe that the problem and the key to your question is that Article 165 does not give the Council the right to act. This article constitutes a legal basis for the Commission to take possible initiatives to promote coordination between the Member States and the Community's policy. There is no other legal basis in the treaty under the heading of research that the Commission could use to propose measures relating to joint programming initiatives.

There is, of course, a very strong political commitment within the Council for introducing pilot initiatives for joint programming aimed at combating Alzheimer's, in particular, as soon as possible. In the light of this, it is the Presidency's view that the Council should adopt conclusions on this joint programming initiative on the basis of the text that has been tabled by the Commission.

I know that the European Parliament gives high priority to the fight against Alzheimer's disease. In a declaration issued in February, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to recognise this fight as a European public health priority. You are, of course, familiar with the Commission's proposal. The Presidency will try to ensure that Parliament's views are, as far as possible, incorporated into the conclusions that are to be adopted when the Competitiveness Council meets on 3 December this year.

As regards possible future joint programming initiatives, the Council shares the Member's view that a common approach should be chosen to adopt these initiatives under the research heading. Unfortunately, there is currently only one method available and that is to adopt Council conclusions for each separate initiative. This is because the treaty contains no appropriate legal basis for adopting other measures.

**Elena Oana Antonescu**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (RO) The Swedish Presidency wishes to adopt in December the conclusions regarding the measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases without even waiting for Parliament's view on this issue.

I was rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on this dossier and, given these circumstances, I support the adoption of a resolution to express Parliament's

position on the measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases, especially Alzheimer's disease, through joint programming of research activities.

Neurodegenerative diseases pose a major health problem in Europe. Advances in medical science and the standard of living in developed countries have created conditions resulting in an increase in life expectancy, but the number of people affected by neurodegenerative disease has also risen.

This is a problem which has a number of different aspects to it. Some aspects relate to the quality of life of those affected by these diseases, the impact which the disease has on their close family or on those who care for them. It is equally a problem affecting the sustainability of the health care systems which will have to cope with an increased number of patients, at a time when, as a result of the ageing population, the proportion of people no longer working is on the rise.

The Commission's proposal focuses on the research-related aspects. The resolution which we are proposing equally emphasises the results which will be achieved through coordinating research activities and the extent to which they will help improve the current situation. Therefore, I urge our efforts to be focused in two main areas: scientific research and ensuring that the efforts made are reflected in the results achieved in terms of the quality of care which patients can enjoy.

Bearing in mind the interest which Parliament has shown over time in this area and the importance of this dossier, which is a pilot project for the joint programming of research activities, it is vital that Parliament's position is taken into account when drafting the Council's conclusions.

Parliament must be involved in all initiatives relating to future joint programming in the field of research. In fact, Article 182 of the Treaty of Lisbon ensures a suitable legal basis for future developments in this area.

**Patrizia Toia**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the initiative that we are about to launch is very important for two reasons: the first is the subject of the research, which concerns the fight against neurodegenerative diseases, and the second is the joint programming methods for the research.

Clearly, we would have preferred Parliament to have been more directly involved in the pilot project – this has been said and it is the subject of our question. While we must press on now and not bring matters to a halt, we are nonetheless asking for guarantees that our opinion will be taken into account in the Competitiveness Council's deliberations, and that a more certain legal basis will be defined in future so that Parliament can be fully involved and there can be a greater sense of ownership in this field of research.

We must now intervene with adequate means and resources to prevent and eradicate the widespread scourge of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and the other diseases, which are destined to become more common as our population ages. We call for efforts to be focused on extensive, large-scale studies, aimed both at diagnosis and at identifying cures. Research into biomarkers, into early diagnosis methods based on a multidisciplinary approach, the compilation of vast databases, and the search for curative medicines and appropriate treatment and service models would appear crucial.

I wish to make just one request in this House: that we ignore neither the individual circumstances of patients, which are too often excluded in the context of these types of disease, nor the involvement of patients' and relatives' associations. From a methodological point of view, we believe that joint research projects are very important because they fulfil an essential requirement: that of pooling efforts and resources and overcoming these divisions, these duplications, and therefore being able to create a critical mass that is sufficient to produce satisfactory results from this type of research.

If we consider that, in other parts of the world, joint public and private efforts manage to invest tens of millions of euros, we realise how much there remains for us to do and how much we still have to do, by directing our efforts towards joint projects, towards strategic lines of action and joint programmes between the Member States and Europe and towards common programmes between public and private operators, without disregarding that international framework that puts us in contact with major scientific developments at international level.

**Jorgo Chatzimarkakis**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, today we are debating a motion for resolution on neurodegenerative diseases. The intention is actually for this to become a directive, and so next time, we should also be debating a directive on this subject. The diseases that we are discussing today – Alzheimer's disease, although Parkinson's disease is also referred to in the text – are diseases of the brain which constitute a major challenge for Europe. The long-term costs are set to soar and there is still a lot of research to do. Unfortunately, there is a lot of duplicated research and

bureaucracy in Europe. Thus, with this motion for a resolution, we want to eliminate the duplicated research, bureaucracy and fragmentation.

The Group of the United European Left – Nordic Green Left has tabled a motion for the research results to be made publicly available. I think this motion is a good one. Unfortunately, the wording is wrong, and I would therefore ask for it to be reworded so that it can be incorporated better. Essentially, there is a problem with regard to European patents. It would be good if the Commission, and the Council, too, could take up the subject of European patents in the areas of pharmaceuticals and bio-research and make it clear that we need this. In any case, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe supports this motion for a resolution.

**Philippe Lamberts**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I should have been rapporteur on this dossier, so I feel a bit disappointed. However, I am happy that we are moving forward. It is not the time for an interinstitutional dispute. I am happy that the Council is prepared to move.

I have a number of observations to make. Indeed, we hope here in Parliament that the Council will take on board the ideas in the resolutions that we are going to vote on tomorrow.

I would emphasise the need to have the right balance between – like in climate change – mitigation and adaptation. Here, I am speaking about preventing this disease and understanding why it happens, what the factors are, so we can really prevent it effectively, because that is always the most effective and also the least expensive way of fighting disease.

Is the joint programming initiative enough? Well, not in the sense that this should become the norm, that in such major undertakings, working together should be the norm, not just a voluntary thing, but something that would really bind all Member States into working together effectively.

Secondly, on financial priorities, the first question is: are we spending enough on these types of diseases? We believe this is not the case and we would strongly encourage, within the forthcoming framework programmes, taking some money from big programmes like ITER, which the best scientists are telling us will pay off maybe in 60 years, and put some of that money into research into Alzheimer's disease and other diseases of a similar nature. I think that this is really needed.

**Marisa Matias**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) First of all, I would like to express my complete support with regard to the question that was asked by Mr Reul and, in particular, to point out that the fundamental issue – the fundamental political issue here – is precisely a matter of joint programming of research.

What happened on the issue of joint programming on neurodegenerative diseases and, in particular, Alzheimer's disease, was that the rules changed in the middle of the process. We went from having a report to having a resolution, thereby taking away our codecision powers on this issue. We stopped being MEPs and instead became advisers. I would therefore like to know, at least, whether what we recommend will be taken into account or not.

Programming research activities, in any area, is a political choice and not a technical choice and, in this regard, Parliament's role should be emphasised and strengthened. In my view, defining priorities that are political means that they should be scrutinised, should be transparent and should be democratic. What happened in relation to the joint decision and joint programming of research on Alzheimer's disease is a process that should not be repeated. Should it ever be repeated, please at least give us plenty of warning. I therefore hope that the last thing that can happen is that the decisions and the recommendations tabled by Parliament on this issue are not taken into consideration.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MRS KOCH-MEHRIN

*Vice-President*

**Diane Dodds (NI)**. – Madam President, in my constituency of Northern Ireland, we currently have 16 000 people suffering from dementia. They, their families and their carers will welcome a proactive approach to tackling this disease, which can be so devastating to both sufferers and families.

It is in areas like this that I believe it is good to see cooperation across European states. I believe that a coordinated approach to tackling disease can bring forward new evidence, new medical breakthroughs and, in time, hopefully improve treatment and cure.

In the United Kingdom, we currently have just over 400 000 people suffering from Alzheimer's. This United Kingdom figure is likely to be something in the region of 750 000 people by 2025. It is therefore imperative that something is done to improve our diagnosis, treatment and prevention and social research into the welfare of patients and their families, particularly families who act as carers. A coordinated approach and a sharing of research are vital, as long as that research respects the sanctity of human life in all its forms.

**Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE).** – (PT) I welcome the initiatives and the actions undertaken at European level to combat neurodegenerative diseases and, in particular, Alzheimer's disease. The Member States have been developing research efforts in this field. It is important that cooperation among Member States is encouraged, to ensure increased coordination in terms of scientific research and technological development, and avoid fragmentation.

Joint programming of research is a valuable tool for reducing fragmentation by involving, at European level, the Member States, the public sector and the private sector. This joint programming tool will be vital for the future of the European Research Area. Developing the European Research Area lies at the heart of the research policy of the Treaty of Lisbon.

However, I am concerned about the implementation of this joint programming tool in terms of bureaucratic complexity and delays in administrative procedures. I would therefore like to ask what the plans are for using a process based on economy of scale, combining efficiency, simplification and fast-tracking of administrative procedures so as to promote excellence and to encourage collaboration at European level, as called for by the importance of this issue.

**Nessa Childers (S&D).** – Madam President, as a former health care professional of over 30 years, it was distressing to learn that Parliament would not be consulted regarding the Commission's new proposals on Alzheimer's disease. However, we must move on.

As Europe's population becomes older, the impact of Alzheimer's will become deeper too. The number of Alzheimer's cases worldwide is predicted to grow from 35 million today to 107 million cases in 2050.

One of the most harrowing aspects of Alzheimer's disease is the many people it affects apart from the patient. In Ireland, for example, there are 50 000 listed carers to cater for Ireland's 44 000 sufferers. This disease is often called a family disease because of the chronic stress of watching a loved one slowly decline.

The further role of the European Parliament in the fight against Alzheimer's disease should not be discounted. Any new direction by the EU should take account of Parliament's unique voice on the matter and should move to assist not just Alzheimer's sufferers but also the many carers who work to increase their quality of life.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE).** – Madam President, obviously, coordinating research in this area is really important, and this is not just about Alzheimer's disease, as the term 'neurodegenerative' covers a multitude of diseases.

Parliament actually has a very significant role to play in how that research will be done. I draw attention to the ongoing discussions between Parliament and the Council on the issue of the welfare of animals used in scientific experimentation. I am concerned – and hopeful, because of our rapporteur and the direction of the talks – that we continue to allow necessary research using animals in a way that is more welfare friendly than perhaps it is now. This is because we need research in this area in order to do the things that have been spoken about to prevent, and to treat people – and we may be amongst them ourselves in time – who unfortunately may be affected by these diseases.

I hope we can have an early agreement at second reading on this very important directive. While we may not have had a great input into this particular issue, we will have had one into the ongoing research.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, the question of the battle against this disease was raised – and credit should be given for this – during the French Presidency. It was said then that the EU should take action in this matter. It would be good if the next Presidency took up this matter and treated it with equal importance. It has already been said here that this problem affects millions of people and their families, who are all suffering.

When we meet our constituents, we often hear this question: what does the EU do for the citizens of Europe? What are you there for? What are you responsible for? What do you do? It is just this type of question which



should be the subject of efforts to build an image of authority and importance for the European Union. This is what our citizens need. Joint efforts to combat diseases of this kind must be a priority for the EU institutions.

**Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL).** – (EL) Madam President, I take the problem of combating neurodegenerative diseases – and especially Alzheimer's – extremely seriously.

It is therefore very useful to have and achieve coordinated action between the Member States of the European Union in combating the causes and in addressing the problem of prevention and treatment and the consequences which such diseases have on patients, on society as a whole and on the public health of the citizens of the European Union.

I believe that the priority and main approach should be in the field of prevention and not in the field of medication. The Member States should also be encouraged to set up monitoring centres for patients and their carers and to secure equal scientific participation by the Member States in this research endeavour by the European Union.

Finally, the database created in agreement with the Council and the Member States must be under public and state ownership within the framework of national systems and the conclusions must be publicised at a public world forum. Finally, it is up to us to control the budget for this issue.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D).** – (LT) Certainly, I agree that at this time, it is particularly important to devote attention to scientific research to ensure help for people suffering from Alzheimer's, as our European Union unites 27 Member States and not all states are equally able to offer assistance to Alzheimer sufferers. There are different health care systems, different social service systems, different support for those families with such a patient. Therefore, this scientific research is vitally important and we must concentrate and find, first of all, funding, coordinated work and coordinated activities. Secondly, it is very important that there is funding to implement that research and offer real support to people suffering from that disease, as well as their families.

**Herbert Reul (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, I will be very brief. The importance of this has already been stated by several speakers. It is a disease that affects many people and that number is growing. It is even more essential for the Member States to work together, to combine forces, in order to be effective. As far as this goes, this is a right and sensible path to take.

It is a shame that, when it comes to the procedures, we have difficulty getting Parliament involved. It is regrettable that this resolution had to be prepared at the last minute. However, if a good result is achieved in the end, then that is what is important.

**Cecilia Malmström, President-in-Office of the Council.** – (SV) Madam President, Alzheimer's and other dementia-related diseases are dreadful. I believe that many of us who have seen a relative affected by Alzheimer's know how it can destroy a previously healthy person and how painful it is for family and other relatives, and I feel very strongly that we need to invest more resources in researching this terrible disease.

It is clear that we need to take new steps to better coordinate our knowledge and research in Europe, and the Commission's pilot initiative aims to mobilise the best researchers we have to attempt to understand, cure and prevent both Alzheimer's and other dementia-related diseases.

Within the framework of the current troika between France, the Czech Republic and now Sweden, we discussed at an early stage the importance of including Alzheimer's as a joint priority issue in the context of the work relating to public health. The French Presidency held a very important conference, as one of the honourable Members mentioned, and the Swedish Presidency held a conference in September on dignified ageing, with Alzheimer's as one of the items on the agenda.

As I said, the Council intends to adopt conclusions on this on 3 December, and we will, of course, take into account the excellent resolution that you have produced and that you will vote on tomorrow. I am certain that the issue of Alzheimer's will come up again within the framework of the research programme and similar initiatives in the very near future, so thank you very much for raising this very important issue.

**President.** – A motion for a resolution<sup>(3)</sup> to wind up the debate has been tabled under Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

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(3) See Minutes

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) I welcome the proposal for a recommendation of the Commission on joint programming of research in the area of neurodegenerative diseases. The population's mental health is a vital issue for ensuring a decent quality of life. Diseases of this type are affecting an ever-increasing number of people in the EU. This is why efforts are required to combat the factors responsible for triggering these diseases. However, in order to combat these factors, they need to be identified through research. I believe that the pilot project for joint programming of research activities offers a definite advantage in terms of pooling the efforts for funding research, which will result in a more efficient use of the funds earmarked for research in this area. Furthermore, cooperation based on networks created by national research centres and the joint use of the required infrastructure are all the more beneficial, given that not all Member States have the necessary resources to undertake research activities at their own expense, even though they are facing a high number of cases involving neurodegenerative diseases. It will be paramount for the research results to be used to inform the population about the ways of supporting mental health, thereby helping reduce the number of patients and maintain the viability of national public health care systems.

**António Fernando Correia De Campos (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the Commission's communication to Parliament offers an optimistic analysis of the expected benefits of cooperation in research among Member States and of the coordination that the Commission can carry out, in the context of the Seventh Framework Programme, with regard to neurodegenerative diseases, and Alzheimer's disease in particular. The measures proposed in the communication only concern the principle of making better use of existing resources and programmes: the 'Health' Programme, the Seventh Framework Programme, the EU Action Plan on disabilities, the open method of coordination and the Statistical Programme. Will optimising our use of these resources be enough to achieve the expected results? What coordination mechanisms is the Commission proposing that could not have been implemented before the communication? What added value does it provide? What new, practical measures is the Commission thinking of adopting to stimulate cooperation in research, in a situation where resources and teams already exist, although they are fragmented? Will giving greater visibility to the issue and using existing instruments be enough to resolve it?

**Proinsias De Rossa (S&D)**, *in writing*. – I support this Resolution welcoming the proposed pilot project for joint programming of research activities in the field of neurodegenerative diseases. Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease affect more than seven million citizens of the European Union. No cures are currently available for neurodegenerative diseases and knowledge about prevention, treatment, and identification of risk factors is very limited. Indeed, most of the research effort in the field of neurodegenerative diseases is carried out by Member States, with a relatively low level of transnational coordination, leading to fragmentation and limited sharing of knowledge and best practices among Member States. Joint programming could be highly valuable in reducing fragmentation of the research effort, leading as it would to a pooling of a critical mass of skills, knowledge and financial resources. However, Article 182(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as inserted by the Treaty of Lisbon, which establishes measures necessary for the implementation of the European research area, could provide a more appropriate legal basis for future joint programming initiatives in the field of research. The Commission should consider using Article 182(5) as a legal basis for all future proposals for joint programming of research activities.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FI) Madam President, Alzheimer's disease is a confusing illness that changes the sufferer's world into somewhere unknown and perilous. Life becomes a highly dangerous 'now', where there are no past memories and lessons learnt to build a bridge of security to the present moment. Moreover, this fateful human tragedy is made all the worse by the fact that there is no known cure for the disease at this time. The illness also involves the suffering of close relatives. It is sometimes called a family illness, with relatives often suffering from chronic stress. The social impact is enormous and takes a heavy toll. As the population ages in Europe, neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, are becoming more and more a public health issue: there are now more than seven million patients, and that number is expected to double in the next decade. Medical science, however, still does not even fully understand the causes of the disease. There are some promising findings from research, but we need coordinated efforts if we are to achieve a breakthrough. In order to compile the data from the research of private and public organisations and the Member States and coordinate their innovations, we need Community programming:

that way, there is hope that more effective prevention, diagnoses and treatment with regard to these diseases will become a reality as soon as possible in practical care work. I am convinced that the people who are struggling with neurodegenerative diseases – the patients, relatives and carers – will vigorously support any collaborative attempts to look for new ways to deal with these conditions. It is just these sorts of projects that tell our citizens why we are here today at all: they justify the Union's entire existence. I agree with my colleague, Mr Reul, that procedure and competence take second place when one is actually headed in the right direction.

**Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FI) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, in the summer, the Commission adopted the Council's recommendation urging the Member States of the EU to engage in joint programming of research into neurodegenerative diseases. This is important if even better use is to be made of the limited resources for research. We need to remember, however, that, in addition to research, Europe needs a more extensive action programme on dementia. Earlier this year, the European Parliament approved a written statement calling on the Commission to draft an action plan on Alzheimer's disease. Parliament's statement emphasised the importance of four issues: developments in research, early diagnosis, improved quality of life for patients and their carers, and the status of the Alzheimer's associations. I would like to remind everyone that the programme is urgent and the Commission needs to get started on the action that Parliament has asked it to take.

**Richard Seeber (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) In our increasingly elderly society, the number of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's or senile dementia will continue to increase. In order to be as prepared for this as possible, we need to create better research structures and make better use of the existing facilities. The planned pilot project in this area is an ideal starting point for interlinking the current research efforts better. However, prevention is also important alongside providing the best possible care for those affected. The Member States need to step up their information campaigns regarding an active lifestyle.

## 19. One-minute speeches on matters of political importance

**President**. – The next item is the one-minute speeches on matters of political importance in accordance with Rule 150 of the Rules of Procedure.

**Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE)**. – (RO) I wish to draw your attention to the political situation in Romania and to the impact this is having on Romania's relations with the Community's institutions.

In October 2009, the Social Democratic Party quit the government. The newly created opposition brought down the government with a motion of censure, rejected the first new government proposed and refused to take part in negotiations on the formation of a government. As a result, Romania cannot fulfil the obligations it has to the European Commission, the World Bank and the IMF, in terms of the credit it has borrowed. This is the reason why we are in the situation where some of the commitments undertaken with regard to reforming the state cannot be fulfilled in time.

The political instability in Romania was mainly triggered by the political actions of the Social Democratic Party. The reasons behind this are not only electoral. The aim in the medium term is to halt the reforms concerning administration, the rule of law, justice and anti-corruption.

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**. – (PT) Last month, the regions of Europe were in the spotlight. The European Week of Regions and Cities consolidated the position of the regions as a fundamental part of the solution in the European response to global challenges. Such was the conclusion of President Barroso, Commissioner Samecki and the hundreds of debates that took place, leaving no room for doubt.

In more specific terms, holding the important meeting of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions of Europe, which saw Members of the European Parliament attend for the first time, also represented a milestone in regional policy in favour of European integration. Global challenges and European responses represent a perfect opportunity for a new strategy for the outermost regions. These regions, such as the Azores, beyond the permanent difficulties that we are all used to hearing about, offer a range of possibilities that provide clear opportunities for us to make progress and to give Europe a distinct advantage in new areas that are vital to our responses to global challenges.

The President of the Commission therefore needs to put a definitive end to the palace coup that the Commission's 'non-paper' suggests was being prepared while we, MEPs and European citizens, were supporting ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its importance in defending territorial cohesion ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Madam President, EUR 465 million has been allocated to the LEADER funding programme in Ireland for the period 2007 to 2013. However, just two years into the five-year programme, only 18% of project funding has been spent because the local development companies who manage the projects have found themselves caught up in red tape and excessive bureaucracy.

There are reams of pages of rules, accompanied by an extensive inspection procedure. Part of the problem is that interpretation of the myriad rules can vary from one inspector to another. The other part of the problem is that some of the rules are mindless in the first place. One project worker said that he spent 50% of his time recording what he was doing in the other 50%.

Of course we need accountability, but it has reached a stage where there is now a disincentive for local groups to apply for funding. Millions will go unspent, which would be criminal given the need to kick-start our economies with whatever funding is available. We need common sense in Dublin, and we need to ensure that the European Commission ensures that this happens.

**Karima Delli (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Madam President, President Václav Havel's speech to our House highlighted one of the fundamental principles of the European Union: solidarity among human beings.

We are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, that wall of shame. Following 9 November 1989, we were told that humanity would finally be set free. Democracy and human rights were supposed to extend to the entire planet, knocking down walls, removing barriers between peoples.

However, for one fallen wall, how many others have been erected on our continent?

The walls erected in Ceuta and Melilla, for example, to ward off the arrival of men and women fleeing war, poverty and global warming, the walls stretching from the detention centres, the gates of our cities as far as the Libyan desert, via Lampedusa, where even children are locked up in the name of the Return Directive.

Let us knock down the walls of fortress Europe, let us build bridges, not walls ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Evžen Tošenovský (ECR).** – (CS) Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we view some of the events taking place in the world today with greater sensitivity. Today we are quite able to make a realistic assessment of events in Russia. In earlier times, we experienced any events in Soviet Union as ideological pressure but now we discuss trade under conditions of absolute individual freedom. With the approach of winter, there is mounting anxiety, of course, over what will happen with supplies of gas from Russia via Ukraine. Studies of the January crisis clearly show how different the situation was in the western and eastern parts of Europe. They will lead to a more careful approach to the preparation of crisis scenarios. It is important to find the best possible solution to contractual relationships at the international level and, at the same time, to provide more information in situations of this kind. The high costs of technical measures also oblige us to consider carefully whether to finance them from the public purse or on the basis of European directives. The question is how much gas we actually need to store and how to finance it. It is important to distinguish between a real crisis and a business matter in relation to gas and at what point senior political figures should enter the negotiations and what the market should control. We must avoid being drawn into excessive bureaucratic interference.

**Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL).** – Madam President, today the EU Commission is demanding of the Irish Government savage cuts in Ireland's budget, involving the slashing of public services and the living standards of working people, possibly even for pensioners and the unemployed.

The Commission should know, however, that it is conspiring with the Irish Government in a lie to pretend that the money given to bail out the banks is not State aid while, at the same time, hammering the public sector.

However, Irish workers and community activists are fighting back. Tens of thousands marched in protest last Friday; thousands of workers marched in Dublin today; and on 24 November, a public sector workers' strike is scheduled, in order to stop these attacks.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, that should now be upgraded to a 24-hour general strike to bring down this appalling government, which has no mandate for these policies, and to halt the policy of the

Commission and of the Irish Government to slash and burn the living standards and services of working people.

**Paul Nuttall (EFD).** – Madam President, I would like to draw this assembly's attention to the disastrous effect that the Biocides Directive is having across the UK. This punitive and non-sensical directive bans the use of strychnine, which has been used to control the mole population in the UK for the past 70 years. This was the case until the EU got itself involved. As a result, mole catchers are only allowed to use aluminium phosphate, which costs twice as much as strychnine and is putting many of them out of business.

But it gets worse. While strychnine kills a mole in up to 15 minutes, aluminium phosphate takes up to three days, ensuring that the mole has a slow and painful death.

This crazy directive is not only causing job losses across the UK, but it is also cruel and inhumane and it is another small reason why the UK is better off out.

**Corneliu Vadim Tudor (NI).** – (RO) The President of the Atra Kadisha World Organisation, Grand Rabbi David Schmidl, asked me to be, and I quote, 'their spokesman in the European Union' where they would like a committee to be set up to deal with any complaints concerning the desecration of the grounds in cemeteries. The Geneva Treaty should also be updated and improved.

I do not wish to give specific examples and make accusations against anyone, but I have seen with my own eyes photographs depicting Jewish cemeteries where horses and cattle graze on graves. I have also seen images of tombstones turned into basic toilets, as well as old Jewish catacombs dating back 2 000 years where the sacred human remains are in an appalling state. The remaining cemeteries have been invaded by bulldozers with excavators digging up relics.

This is a great affront to God. The Holocaust is a tragic scar on the face of mankind and it must never be repeated, not even on a miniature scale. I myself made a pilgrimage to Auschwitz with my children and believe me, I know very well what I am talking about.

These people are asking us in the European Parliament to defend all vestiges of all religions, not only Jewish vestiges, but also Romanian vestiges in Europe.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**János Áder (PPE).** – (HU) Madam President, our dear neighbours, the Austrians, have been polluting one of Hungary's most beautiful rivers, the Rába, for years. Two weeks ago, we could see a layer of foam half a metre thick on the river, clearly highlighting this fact. However, not content with polluting our river, our dear neighbours now want to pollute our air as well with the incinerator planned for construction in Heiligenkreuz. They want to build an incinerator in Heiligenkreuz 300 metres from the Hungarian border, which could incinerate almost ten times the volume of refuse produced in Burgenland annually, and all of this with the European Union's assistance. This planned investment infringes Directive 2008/98/EC. This is why I am calling on the European Commission not to approve any EU assistance for the construction of the incinerator in Heiligenkreuz.

**Kriton Arsenis (S&D).** – (EL) Madam President, the major challenge facing mankind in terms of climate change is how we can stop building up more carbon in the atmosphere and start storing it in the ground.

Given that it is impossible for us to stop emitting carbon gases over the next 50 years, increasing carbon storage in the ground is our only hope and should be the priority of policies to combat this problem. In order to achieve this, we need to increase plant cover. As part of this effort, China has planted 54 million hectares of trees, with impressive repercussions on the availability of drinking water and agricultural productivity. Similarly, tree-planting programmes in Rwanda have resulted in such an increase in the flow of rivers towards the capital that it can now be powered solely by a hydroelectric plant.

In the same direction, the US House of Representatives has passed legislation under which the USA will pay USD 5 billion to deal with deforestation.

For these reasons, the stand taken by the Council, which not only has failed to commit to a specific amount in financing for developing countries, but also has failed to say anything about financing to maintain the world's forests, is unacceptable at a time when there is no uniform policy or coordination at European Union level on the protection of forest eco-systems at risk in southern Europe.

Nonetheless, I trust that the European Union's negotiations in Copenhagen will pro-actively support global efforts to put an end to deforestation and to increase tree-planting.

**Giommaria Uggi** (ALDE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, our debate on neurodegenerative diseases permits me to introduce the problem of sclerosis and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and to bring to Parliament's knowledge the fact that 1 50 people throughout Italy have begun a hunger strike as a show of support for Salvatore Usala, an ALS sufferer who has stopped eating in order to protest against the Italian Government's indifference to the problems experienced by patients and their family members who are living with this terrible disease. This campaign is also being supported by members of the Italian Parliament, such as Antonietta Farina, and by our colleague from the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Mr Rinaldi.

Above all, however, this is a struggle that ALS patients and their families face every day, in a dignified and quiet way, as part of the tragedy of having a terrible disease. ALS affects young people but there is no cure for it; and yet, the Italian state is very attentive to everything bar patients and their families. Carrying out research is a challenge for Europe but it is up to the Member States to guarantee patients a dignified existence.

**Michèle Rivasi** (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Madam President, I, for my part, would like to put some questions to you regarding the problem of the AH1N1 flu vaccine.

Currently, the MEPs and their assistants are being asked to have the inoculation, and I would like to share a number of concerns with you.

Firstly, what is the relationship between the risks and benefits? At the moment, the benefits are few, since this is not a flu that causes a huge number of deaths – nowhere near as many as seasonal flu, in any case.

With regard to the risks, on the other hand, we have enough time to consider this aspect, and I would like, in particular, to address the problem of adjuvants. I would like to point something out to you that is rather odd: in the United States, the use of squalene in adjuvants has been prohibited, but the European Medicines Agency has authorised it since most vaccines contain squalene.

The second point is that the European Medicines Agency has confirmed to us that a clinical trial was not performed on children and pregnant women and that it did not have access to an extrapolation from the prototype. I therefore think that more harmonisation may be required.

**Mirosław Piotrowski** (ECR). – (PL) Madam President, the scandalous judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, which orders a cross to be removed from the wall of an Italian school and EUR 5 000 compensation to be paid to one of its pupils for so-called moral damages, has aroused concern not only in Italy, but also in other countries of the European Union. The cross is a symbol both of the Christian religion and of the history and tradition of Europe. Removal of the cross by administrators is the first step to the cultural 'harakiri' of Europe.

Unfortunately, pragmatism of this kind is turning into a consistent plan to combat European values. It is only necessary to recall the removal of references to Christianity in the most important documents of the European Union. We need to return to the original ideas and concepts of the founding fathers of the European Union, who were Christian democrats. Therefore, I appeal to the President of the European Parliament to organise a suitable debate, which will end with a resolution on the subject of the freedom of religious practice in Europe and on the fundamental values on which the European Union is based.

**Ilda Figueiredo** (GUE/NGL). – (PT) In Portugal, and particularly in the north, the economic and social crisis is getting worse and unemployment continues to rise, making this region one of the poorest in the European Union, as recent Eurostat documents show. Large companies continue to announce that they are scaling back their activities and cutting jobs. One of the most serious examples is that of Qimonda, in Vila do Conde, which is in the process of making 600 workers redundant, in addition to around 1 000 that were already made redundant last year. This effectively represents the destruction of one of the largest and most important companies in a strategic industrial sector for technological development.

We cannot accept this situation. It is unacceptable that neither the European Commission nor the Council has found an alternative to the dismantling of this microchip and nanotechnology industry. It is appalling that they remain apathetic in the face of the worsening unemployment and increasing suffering in vast regions of the European Union.

**John Bufton (EFD).** – Madam President, I was due to talk about the pressures unlimited EU migration is putting on the UK. Forgive me for raising a pressing matter recently brought to my attention. As a coordinator on the Regional Development Committee and an MEP for Wales, it was with great concern that I received a leaked copy of a draft communication of the European Commission entitled *A Reform Agenda for a Global Europe: reforming the budget, changing Europe*.

The document proposes a major refocusing of the EU's spending priorities, placing greater emphasis on – and I paraphrase – a global Europe, and less on agriculture and transfers towards well-off regions. This will have a huge impact on British agriculture and structural fund programmes in this current cycle. As a net contributor, the United Kingdom will be forced to give up much more of the rebate, whilst other countries will be the main beneficiaries.

11.8% of funds earmarked for the UK under the cohesion policy go to the poorest regions in Wales. I am very concerned that this leaked document may have consequences for transitional payments at the end of the current programme in 2013. It is time the people of the UK had a referendum on its relationship with this place so they can be the people who decide their destiny, not unelected bureaucrats.

**Krisztina Morvai (NI).** – (HU) As we celebrate here in the European Union so enthusiastically the collapse of the Berlin Wall and Communism with it, we might well ask what has become of the former Communist leaders. I will tell you. They are the ones who have become the most enthusiastic capitalists, neo-liberals and champions of the order of world domination. On their return to power, they have done away with everything that was good in Communism – and let us admit it, there were a few things – such as security of employment and social security. However, they have brought back the most hideous aspects, brutality and terror.

On the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, which had made possible the collapse of the Berlin Wall, people were shot in the eye. At the moment in Hungary, as we speak in the Chamber and celebrate the collapse of Communism, these Communist comrades are holding 16 political prisoners in detention.

I will only celebrate when the political prisoners have been released, when the victims shot in the eye have received justice and when these Communists end this bloodshed and are consigned to the dustbin of history.

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, I would like to speak about the proposition for reform of the European Union budget after 2013. Is it true that this proposition means a substantial reduction in regional funds? Does the European Commission realise that this will radically weaken EU regional and agricultural policy?

The proposition to weaken poorer regions of the EU in order to fund the battle against climate change may hardly be called rational or logical. It would affect the majority of the EU's 271 regions. It is surely possible to help poor regions of the EU while, at the same time, using good projects to tackle climate change, reduce gas emissions and introduce renewable energy and modern technological solutions.

Does the Commission intend, when introducing the proposition for budget reform, to by-pass regional and local authorities in the distribution of funds? In this way, recognition is being taken away from territorial authorities in matters which are of great significance for them.

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D).** – (LT) The European Union has committed itself to establishing an effective mechanism to prevent child sex abuse. Eight months have passed since this particularly important topic was discussed in a plenary session of the European Parliament. We should welcome the fact that since then, the Council has begun to debate a draft directive that aims to improve the legislation in this area. However, time does not stand still and now and again painful events remind us that there is still insufficient protection for our children. Sadly, the consequences of these crimes are devastating and long-lasting. The sexual exploitation of children and the dissemination of pornography are often transnational in nature, and can therefore only be effectively prevented with international cooperation. We must plan for criminal responsibility of new forms of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse that are not envisaged in current legislation. I would like to draw the attention of the new Parliament to this important problem and call on the Council to speed up the discussion of the draft proposals.

**Jelko Kacin (ALDE).** – (SL) Madam President, I am pleased with the progress in relations between the governments of Croatia and Slovenia, which have taken a major political step forward, and with the increase in maturity which both governments have exhibited. The border arbitration agreement which they have signed sends out a positive message and sets an excellent example to the other countries in the region.

However, I note with regret that, only a few days after signing this agreement, the Prime Minister of Croatia also signed a unilateral statement which places a one-sided interpretation on the recently signed agreement. We should not do anything which sows the seeds of doubt or spreads uncertainty, because that is not the way to move forward. Unilateral statements and unilateral actions are never a good choice, nor do they send out the right message. Such action does not promote credibility, it does not encourage the necessary mutual trust and it raises doubts about the seriousness of our intentions and the reality and viability of the agreement. If we are to succeed on this front, we need to make major efforts and strengthen trust amongst ourselves at home, amongst our neighbours and throughout the region.

I call on the government of Croatia to refrain from fresh unilateral actions and I ask the Prime Minister to show political courage and determination instead and to help us overcome the impasses of the past.

**Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR).** – (PL) I would like to draw attention to the fact that we were alarmed last week by the situation, or by the information, that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has asked the European Commission to settle the debt owed to Gazprom by Ukraine. In view of this, I would like to ask if such a request has been received. Does the European Commission intend to make the European Union pay this debt? If the answers to the first two questions are affirmative, then on what grounds would the Commission do this?

Madam President, I would also like you to note that I am the only Member who has not used all of his speaking time.

**Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL).** – Madam President, I have asked for the floor today to inform you of a rather disturbing fact that has come to my knowledge whilst on a visit to Washington DC as part of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs delegation.

On the margins of the current transatlantic negotiations on data protection (SWIFT, PNR), the United States is expanding its National Security Agency data-collection facilities so as to intercept every electronic message within its territory as well as all messages coming in and out of the country.

How can the US pretend to respect the right to privacy when it is building an enormous eavesdropping agency – and how can we just sit to one side and let that happen?

It is our responsibility to raise awareness of this gross abuse of power and violation of our basic rights. I hope you will join me in informing our voters and the citizens in our countries about this through declarations and articles to the press.

**Nick Griffin (NI).** – Madam President, in the last two months, I have suffered victimisation by the UK Labour regime, including withdrawal of my House of Commons pass, refusal to allow me to enter the Sellafield nuclear processing plant – despite my position on a subcommittee of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety – and the refusal of the Citizens' Advice Bureau to sell me an information database openly advertised for sale to all other MEPs.

Madam President, would you agree that political discrimination is not only unlawful but is also an attack not just on me, but also on the functionality of this place and, most important of all, on the voters and the entire democratic process?

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL).** – (PT) The investigation conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work provides some worrying conclusions, stating that generalised unemployment is having negative consequences for the safety and health of workers. According to the study, which involved 27 000 respondents in the 27 Member States, six in every 10 workers feel that the economic crisis and increased unemployment are making working conditions worse. Seventy-five per cent of respondents claimed that the worsening of their health is attributable to the work they do. This information bears out the data from a Eurostat study, which shows that 27 million workers suffer accidents or are affected by occupational diseases and that 137 million workers are exposed to risks on a daily basis. Just this week, yet another serious work-related accident killed five Portuguese workers in Andorra.

This situation requires a rapid response from the European Union and the Member States. This response should involve creating jobs with rights, promoting work and workers, and penalising employers that cut back on prevention and protection measures for workers in order to boost their profits.

**President.** – There was confusion there in assigning the microphone. I should have given the floor to Mr Teixeira. I probably pronounced your name wrongly and that caused the confusion.



**Nuno Teixeira (PPE).** – (PT) The European Commission recently tabled a draft communication on budgetary reform, which included references to cohesion policy that are causing anxiety and confusion, especially where the outermost regions are concerned.

A debate on the Community budget needs to be held urgently, but we believe that the financial framework after 2013 should be based on solidarity and territorial cohesion, this being vital for regions such as Madeira, which face permanent difficulties and which therefore need permanent support.

The intention to alter the focus of cohesion policy from the present regionally based approach to an approach based on value added sectors is unacceptable. Such a change could lead to the abolition of Objective 2, which currently benefits around two thirds of the European regions.

It is incomprehensible that the Commission intends to switch the allocation of funds from a regional to a national basis, or even at European level, rejecting the criterion of proximity that has always underpinned cohesion policy. It is unacceptable for a Member State's long-standing membership of the EU to be a variable in the formula for calculating structural fund allocations, dividing up Member States into new and old, which will render Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty meaningless as regards the outermost regions' access to structural funds.

**Estelle Grelier (S&D).** – (FR) Madam President, as an MEP from Normandy, I would like to draw the Commission's and Parliament's attention to the proposals on offshore Natura 2000 sites, which the French Government has just submitted to the European authorities. These proposals exclude the Antifer dyke situated near Etretat, but compensate for it by enlarging the perimeter to 12 nautical miles.

This decision eases the way for Poweo to install a methane terminal at Antifer and restricts a project to create an offshore wind farm off Fécamp, despite the support shown for this project by local elected representatives, the population and even fishermen. A scientific and consistent proposal has been drafted for the region and has the backing of local operators. Under this proposal there will be six miles of zoning along the entire coastline, including Antifer.

I have three questions: how much progress has the Commission made in examining the zoning proposals? Does it endorse them even though they go against scientific opinions and against the social, economic and cultural activities of the region? And, with the Copenhagen Summit approaching, can Europe reasonably endorse a decision that promotes gas at the expense of the development of renewable energies?

**Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, I would like to draw attention to the health situation in Ukraine. Available data shows that over a million cases of influenza have already been reported, including several dozen cases of the AH1N1 virus. Ukraine has requested international aid and, in particular, for vaccines, medicines, disinfectants, masks, gloves and laboratory supplies.

We know that the Commission has set in motion a special mechanism for civil aid, a monitoring and information centre to coordinate the aid given to Ukraine by EU countries. What is this coordination like? What aid is being given? How is the monitoring system working? I think that public opinion would like to receive an answer to these questions.

**Kinga Gál (PPE).** – (HU) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, two decades have elapsed since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the 20th anniversary of which we have marked, and since the Iron Curtain was torn down. Nevertheless, there has been little to show for these 20 years as we see that in many countries liberated from Communism, we have not yet managed to free ourselves definitively from the habits of the former system.

In the autumn of 2006, the police completely disregarded the right to free assembly on Budapest's streets, as well as the right to a fair trial. The victims of this are still looking, in vain, for justice and the opportunity to exercise their rights. In March this year in Budapest, calls for the prime minister to step down were again met with detentions and inhumane, humiliating treatment. It can still happen in the European Union even today that people are not allowed to use their own language in the land of their birth – like in Slovakia, for instance – or exercise the rights granted by democracy, if the fate of a minority has been imposed on them by history. Take also Romania, where they are in the process of putting up a statue to a former general who gave the order to fire among the participants in demonstrations.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE).** – (PT) The current economic crisis leads to job insecurity. Economic difficulties lead workers to accept, sometimes blindly, job offers that eschew labour laws and the supervision of law enforcement and government authorities. Unfortunately, we have already witnessed in the European Union several cases of exploitation of labour that often genuinely constitute slavery, whether of European citizens,

or non-European citizens. Moreover, we have seen an unusually high number of deaths of migrant workers, including many compatriots of mine, many Portuguese citizens, even when legally employed. These accidents have happened in the workplace and especially in the civil construction sector.

The European Union and its bodies, as well as all the Member States, are therefore urged and called upon to cooperate forcefully and effectively, so as to prevent these situations.

**Sophie Briard Auconie (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to sound the alarm bell regarding the low rate of planning and payment of the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund appropriations.

We are still very far from having planned half of the available funds. With regard to the payments, only 9.62% of the EUR 347 billion for regional policy has been paid to the project leaders. All the countries are affected, some even more so than others. Spain, Luxembourg and Sweden must do their level best to catch up with the countries that are in the lead when it comes to the payment of European funds, such as, for example, the Baltic countries, Ireland and Slovenia.

The European Union's regional policy is one of the most useful policies for our fellow citizens. Indeed, it guarantees economic, social and territorial cohesion through the cofinancing of practical, and very often crucial, projects.

I therefore appeal to the national management authorities to get involved. At the same time, I feel that it is crucial, in a period of economic crisis, for European rules to be adapted to the major problems.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, today we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the democratic changes in Central and Eastern Europe. There was a very appropriate and worthy ceremony, in which Mr Havel and Mr Buzek took part, and there are exhibitions in the European Parliament. That is how it should be, but the European institutions should not restrict themselves to such events only once in many years.

This should be present in our history – the truth about these changes should be present in our educational activities, and it should be initiated by the European institutions. We need a common history textbook of those times, which would show how Europe united, so that the children in our schools can have access to that truth and that knowledge.

On the other hand, many examples can be given of money spent unnecessarily. The British organisation Open Europe says that EUR 7 million was spent on financing a blog about a donkey travelling around the Netherlands. It is time we spent money for Europe more effectively.

**President.** – Ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid we must conclude the one-minute speeches under Rule 150 of the Rules of Procedure at this point. According to Rule 150, we can conduct this type of debate for no more than 30 minutes. These speeches have now gone on for almost 40 minutes, because, unfortunately, many speakers did not keep to one minute.

I tried to give priority to those who did not have a chance to speak in either of the last two debates and I hope you felt it was fairly balanced. We still have four more debates this evening and, as you know, the sitting must close at midnight at the latest.

## **20. Third country nationals subject to or exempt from a visa requirement when crossing external borders (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the report (A7-0042/2009) by Tanja Fajon, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (COM(2009)0366 – C7-0112/2009 – 2009/0104(CNS)).

**Tanja Fajon, rapporteur.** – (SL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Barrot, and all of you attending here today, the European Parliament firmly supports the abolition of the visa regime for all the countries of the Western Balkans. That is also the core idea that has guided us throughout the preparation of the report. I would like to express my compliments, in particular, to the shadow rapporteurs and members of Parliament, as without their support I would not have been able to achieve this result. Likewise, I would like to thank the Council and the Commission for their collaborative efforts which will form the firm bedrock of future

cooperation in this area, especially once the Treaty of Lisbon has been ratified, as that will enable Parliament to adopt any necessary measures through the codecision procedure.

The citizens of the Western Balkans have been isolated by the visa regime for far too long. They have fewer rights today, as regards free travel, than they did in the days of the former Yugoslavia. What young people from the countries of the Western Balkans know about Europe, or America for that matter, today is what they learn from the internet and television. As I come from Slovenia, I can recall that it was actually the Slovene Presidency which initiated the process of visa regime liberalisation in early 2008, five years after the signing of the Thessaloniki Agenda, which guarantees an unambiguous European perspective for the population of the Western Balkans.

I am pleased to welcome the Commission's proposal for the abolition of the visa requirement for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and I am particularly pleased to welcome Slovenia's initiative, which has received strong support from the Member States and which allows the citizens of these countries to start travelling freely to the countries of the Schengen area from 19 December. 1 January 2010 would have entailed logistical difficulties, as the Christmas and New Year holiday period is exactly the time when many citizens of these countries want to travel to visit their relations living in the Member States.

The abolition of visas will make an enormous contribution to the process of regional cooperation and the overcoming of ethnic divisions and will also help to build cultural, social, economic and political bridges.

Ladies and gentlemen, the abolition of visas for the three countries I have mentioned is a very positive step in the right direction. However, I should point out that the countries which were omitted from the visa abolition framework should be allowed to join it as soon as possible or, rather, as soon as they are ready to do so. Naturally, I am talking about Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. We cannot allow them to become ever more isolated, at a time when their neighbouring countries are enjoying the possibility of unlimited travel into the European Union.

Of course, they need to be prepared for visa abolition and I do not mean to suggest here that we need to lower our criteria. What we want to do is to send a clear message to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania: We are waiting for you; you must urge your governments to fulfil their side of the bargain. We, on the other hand, will do everything in our power to ensure that there are no delays in decision making on the European Union's side. I can safely say that this approach has met with the broad support of two committees, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, which is my parent committee.

I would also add that, tomorrow after the vote, I will ask for the floor in order to deliver a special political statement, a common statement of Parliament and the Council, which strongly supports the abolition of the visa requirement for all the countries of the Western Balkans. In this statement, on which we shall vote separately tomorrow, we will both welcome 19 December, the date when the visa requirement will be abolished for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and call on the European Commission to prepare, as soon as possible, a proposal that the visa requirement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania be abolished as soon as they have met the relevant criteria. We, on the other hand, undertake to deal with this proposal under an expedited procedure. I would like us to set a clear date for the abolition of the visa requirement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, although I am aware of the demanding nature of the procedures involved. I hope that the summer of 2010 will prove to be a realistic date for the abolition of the visa requirement for these two countries.

Just to conclude. We should not forget Kosovo, either, if we do not want it to become a black hole on the map ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

Let me just conclude: The European Union has a political responsibility to finalise the process of visa liberalisation and tomorrow, I expect Parliament's broad support in this regard.

**Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE).** – Madam President, it is regrettable that the Swedish Presidency could not be represented here tonight in the person of a Minister, as it would very much have liked.

I understand that the Council Presidency was not invited and was told there was no need for it to be here. I would like to remind the House that the Swedish Presidency has driven and supported the process of visa liberalisation for the Western Balkans from the very beginning.

We should – and I know my colleague Tanja Fajon, the rapporteur, agrees with me – have a chance to thank the Council Presidency, for we owe it the joint declaration between Parliament and the Council, supported by the Commission, which is unique in the history of this institution.

I would like an explanation, though maybe not here and now, of why the Council Presidency could not attend, and I would like it to go on the record that the Minister could not be here because no invitation was made.

**President.** – I have been informed that the Council Presidency was invited, but it had scheduling problems and so is unable to be here. However, I will look into the matter.

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** – (FR) Madam President, I wish to reply to the question put by Mrs Corazza Bildt and to say that the Swedish Presidency has indeed been very active in this process which, as Mrs Fajon has just ably explained, enables us to offer a number of citizens from the Member States concerned, and young people in particular, the possibility of engaging and interacting more with this Europe, which they are, at times, rather unfamiliar with.

It is true that this proposal represents an historic stage in the development of European short-stay visa policy within the context of our relations with the countries of the Western Balkans. Moreover, the Commission welcomes the adoption of this legislative proposal by both the European Parliament and the Council. Everyone is aware of its major political impact and of the sensitive nature of the issue, which affects all of the citizens of the countries concerned.

I understand Parliament's position. I would like, in this connection, to confirm the Commission's strong commitment to monitor closely the fulfilment, by all of the countries concerned, of all the criteria laid down in the road map. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had already been the subject of a positive assessment; the dialogue was therefore concluded with that country. In October, Serbia and Montenegro hosted missions led by the Commission, in association with the experts from the Member States, and those missions confirmed that all of the criteria of the respective road maps had been fulfilled properly.

We are going to follow the same method for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite the very significant progress made over the last few months, Bosnia and Albania have not yet been able to complete the necessary reforms requested in the road map to justify the exemption of the visa requirement. However, as you just said, Mrs Fajon, it is already very encouraging for them to hear that their neighbours already have this option of being exempted from the visa requirement, and I can confirm to you that I personally will do everything in my power to ensure that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina can obtain this visa exemption as quickly as possible, as you want.

I invite Parliament, which, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, will be a colegislator in the field of visas, to support the structured method of dialogue on the liberalisation of visas, which is the method followed by the Commission, because a different approach would cause confusion without really changing the visa regime. It would create false hopes and would be liable to slow down the efforts made by the countries in question to implement the reforms required by the road maps.

At this stage, we are keeping Albania and Bosnia in Annex I to the regulation, while reaffirming the European Union's commitment to help these two countries meet the criteria in their road map, and thus to be exempted from the visa requirement in accordance with the procedures in force.

In this context the Commission supports the text of the joint political declaration, which confirms this strong commitment by the Union to implement as quickly as possible the second stage of this visa liberalisation process for the citizens of Albania and Bosnia, Mrs Fajon.

There you have it, Madam President. I believe that this is a very important point that shows the Balkan States just how attentive Europe is to their expectations and desires.

**Sarah Ludford, rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.** – Madam President, the commitment supported in the Fajon report and backed by the proposed Council and Parliament declaration is a far-sighted one. It is to give visa-free travel to all the people of the Western Balkans. This is not solely a generous and altruistic move. It is also hard-headed and shrewd, since security in the widest sense of the word will be promoted and advanced. People who are free, and free to travel, tend to be committed to peaceful solutions and less prey to introverted nationalism which is a security threat.

Who can fail to be moved by the images on the screens outside this Chamber and all the celebrations we have had this week marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall? While these obstacles cannot be compared to the Wall, they are still a barrier to the free communication and wider horizons that promote understanding and tolerance. Our insistence on an inclusive approach should include a fair result by the 15th anniversary of the Dayton Agreement.

I would like to congratulate and thank the rapporteur, Mrs Fajon, for her hard work and the way that she has included all the nuances in every twist and turn of her deliberations over the last two months.

I do also thank the Council, and especially the Swedish Presidency, for their work in helping us to get agreement on the declaration, which confirms the definite aim of visa liberalisation for all the citizens of the Western Balkans as soon as possible – and we hope that this will be during 2010, because the absence of a reasonable commonality in the target dates for achieving this free travel is divisive and creates instability.

We also have made a commitment, in the Fajon report, to working for a visa facilitation and visa liberalisation road map for Kosovo similar to those for the other Western Balkan countries.

I would also like to add the hope that the Government of the United Kingdom – which is not included in the present decision of the EU Schengen zone by virtue, of course, of not being a member – will also shortly follow the same path. I always feel a certain schizophrenia when working on these matters on the Schengen projects because I am a British MEP, but it obviously would be a good thing both for the European Union and for the Western Balkan region if the UK were to follow suit as quickly as possible.

I would like to conclude by thanking Mrs Fajon, the rapporteur.

**Anna Maria Corazza Bildt**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, the PPE Group is committed to speeding up visa liberalisation for all countries in the Western Balkans by July 2010. We welcome and support the proposal to grant visa liberalisation for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia by Christmas this year.

We understand the plea of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania – a young generation which has been locked in and left out and feels imprisoned. To them we say: 'We are on your side; we are ready when you are ready'. It is regrettable that the slow start by the authorities in Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina left them behind. The responsibility for any delays rests with them. We exhort them to meet the benchmarks as soon as possible. We know that the Commission is helping in that process.

Unfortunately, I have to say that I am saddened that it took us three months of negotiations for the PPE Group to convince the political Left in this House to operate according to the treaties. Is that so complicated? Finally, it too has understood that the European Parliament is not above the law.

With all respect to my distinguished colleagues, I have to denounce a non-constructive attitude. There are no short cuts. There is no abracadabra. We are not here to score points. We are here to obtain results for the citizens of the Balkans. Let me be clear, any provisional mixed intermediary status does not accelerate the process and does not put pressure on the Commission or the Council. It definitely does not send any strong political message.

I would like to conclude by saying that I experienced the siege of Sarajevo and the shelling for a year and a half. To my friends there, I am saying that I am committed.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Claude Moraes**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, until 2008 and the Slovenian Presidency, not enough progress was made on what the Commissioner rightly called an historic move towards visa liberalisation for the Western Balkans.

As Mrs Ludford said, very correctly, there are deep practical considerations as to why this is important for us and why this is not just a reactive measure. So, on behalf of the Socialist and Democrat Group, I want to thank the rapporteur, Mrs Fajon, for the careful and painstaking work she has undertaken to move the European Union towards this ultimate goal of abolition of the visa regime for all the countries of the Western Balkans. This has been done with the shadow rapporteurs and with the Commission and Council, and it should be commended.

While it is clear that many see visa liberalisation as having great benefits on both sides; it is also the case that we have to take the whole House with us on the question of the road map and of ensuring that fundamental

reforms are carried out in all of these countries in order to gain confidence for a truly decent visa liberalisation regime.

The task for our rapporteur was to make a breakthrough on visa liberalisation while taking the House with her. She has done this in the form of the declaration that she negotiated with the Council. The declaration looks to visa liberalisation for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, to an acceleration of the liberalisation regime for Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to a sensitive compromise on the question of Kosovo.

For all these reasons, my group supports this report and hopes it will gain widespread support in the House.

**Ulrike Lunacek**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, I would first like to join with the previous speaker in expressing my sincere thanks to both rapporteurs, Mrs Fajon and Mrs Ludford, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and also to the shadow rapporteurs. We have succeeded in presenting a proposal demanding that the Commission and the Council come up with an overall package for all the people of the entire Western Balkans, leaving no one out. I very much hope – and I am addressing Commissioner Barrot in this regard – that you can convince the Council that the goal of visa liberalisation should also apply to Kosovo, so the dialogue will now begin, and so that visa liberalisation will also be achieved for Bosnia and Albania by no later than the middle of next year. I would prefer it to be sooner.

I would like to make one thing clear. Of course, it is a matter of implementation, but I have heard that everything has not yet been implemented in Serbia. I would like to know what you think about this. It is important to implement everything. I would like to thank everyone involved and I hope that all of the people ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Doris Pack (PPE)**. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, twenty years ago, my fellow countrymen from East Germany obtained the freedom to travel. A few years later, Slobodan Milošević arbitrarily jeopardised and then took away the freedom of travel for Serbs and then for all other countries in the region. How often since 2000 have we in this House, in declarations and in public debates, wished for the freedom of travel – visa-free travel – for the countries of South-Eastern Europe. We know that the EU cannot achieve this alone, as the national governments need to agree to it. We need to overcome the anxieties in our population. Criminals are everywhere – they do not need a visa! They cross borders without a visa. That is therefore not something that we should be concerned about.

It is about the young generation, who, with the help of visa-free travel, can finally go wherever they want to. We are therefore very pleased that the citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia will now finally be able to travel freely again. How wonderful! There is still a hint of sadness in that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo cannot yet join them, but in December, we expect the Commission to acknowledge the huge progress that Albania has made and to see that Bosnia and Herzegovina has also made a certain amount of improvement. Unfortunately, there are politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina who are less concerned about the interests of their citizens, as they are secure in the knowledge that they themselves, of course, have visa-free travel. I therefore believe that we need to ensure that this is possible by next summer. I hope that Mr Barrot will help us in that. However, we must not forget Kosovo. It must not be the last remaining black mark. We are obliged to help Kosovo to meet the benchmarks. It cannot do it alone. Visa-free travel is a deeply humanitarian act. I am pleased that we were all in a position to make this happen. Thank you for this opportunity, Mr Barrot.

**Kinga Göncz (S&D)**. – (HU) Europe and the European Union started off as a peace project and are now going through the longest peacetime period in history. Therefore, we are aware of what a powerful instrument integration can be from this perspective. Now we have to use it to deal with the Western Balkans.

The Western Balkans have only recently gone through an extremely traumatic period of war, causing great suffering to a huge number of people. Progress needs to be made with the process of European integration in order to overcome this event. Visa-free travel is an important step in this. Several people have mentioned the opportunity it would provide young people with to establish direct contact and gain first-hand experience, as well as the opportunity for democratic forces to grow in strength. It is not only about providing a message of trust and visa-free travel. Europe can also benefit from the Western Balkans moving closer to the European Union from a security and economic policy perspective. However, it is important that we do not create new divisions in the region, but ensure that every country can participate in the visa-free travel scheme as soon as possible.

**Emine Bozkurt (S&D).** – (NL) Tomorrow, the European Parliament will be voting on the abolition of the short-stay visa requirement for Balkan countries. Not all the countries for whom a road map was drawn up are eligible to receive the waiver on 1 January.

It is very unfortunate that, in one country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Commission proposal permits a disparity between different sections of the population: those able to benefit from visa-free travel to Europe on Croatian or Serbian passports and those – the Bosnian Muslims – who are not in possession of such a passport. This is an embarrassing distinction in view of the country's recent history.

It is up to the European Parliament to send a signal to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania tomorrow. Criteria are criteria, and these requirements need to be met in order to qualify for the visa waiver. As soon as the benchmarks have been met, however, the visa waiver must be granted as soon as possible.

We have seen that a great deal has been done to meet the benchmarks, and we call on the Commission to help Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania to meet all the requirements as soon as possible.

**Zoran Thaler (S&D).** – (SL) For the citizens of the Western Balkans, the abolition of the visa requirement for travel to the European Union does not only have a technical dimension, but an exceptional political charge and significance as well. Today, we rightly commemorated in Parliament the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and of full-blown socialism. However, Skopje, Podgorica and Belgrade will, during this Christmas and New Year, finally get to celebrate the fall of a visa wall which has separated them from us in the European Union for almost 12 years.

For nearly 20 years, the majority of the population of the former Yugoslavia has been denied the opportunity of travelling freely across Europe, which is something they were used to previously, when they were still citizens of the now collapsed socialist federation. We are beginning to see the ugly consequences of such isolation, which has lasted an entire generation, and it is high time that we put an end to it.

However, the Macedonians, the Montenegrins and the Serbs should be joined by the Bosnians and Herzegovinians, the Albanians and the Kosovars as early as possible in 2010. That alone will enable the new generations of those countries to finally see and experience the outside world, establish contacts with other Europeans, contribute to the development of European values at home and equip their nations for fully-fledged membership in our common European story – the European Union.

As Parliament rapporteur for Macedonia, I have received a large number of phone calls in recent days from citizens of various Balkan countries. I wish to reassure them, loud and clear, that their visa-free travel to the EU is not a substitute for their accession to the EU. What their free travel in the EU amounts to is a step towards fully-fledged membership of the EU.

**Kinga Gál (PPE).** – (HU) I would like to welcome this report and congratulate the rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. I also want to say that as far as I can see, on this 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, guaranteeing the crossing of borders in the case of Western Balkan countries becomes part of the series of events that started 20 years ago, like a new wall collapsing.

This is why this proposal should be welcomed. However, we must not forget that the issue of providing visa-free travel is only partially a technical one, while it is a very clear political matter at the same time. This is why it is important. I also support the acceptance of the Joint Declaration because this signals that the European institutions have understood this responsibility. This responsibility also means action at the same time. First of all, it means action by the relevant states which have been unable to meet the visa-free travel conditions to fulfil these requirements as soon as possible, not to mention action from the European Commission without whose help this process would drag on.

**Axel Voss (PPE).** – (DE) Madam President, I believe that we are on the right track with regard to the Balkan States. We have drawn closer through visa facilitation and that will help to create stability, although it is also a sign of our appreciation of the efforts that have been made. However, I also think that it is good for us to retain a clear set of rules and for the requirements relating to these also to be complied with. In this regard, I would particularly like to thank Mrs Corazza Bildt for the efforts she has made.

Anything else would, in my opinion, be a pure Brussels-based decision, in which a clear system would be abandoned and no honesty would be shown to the people affected in the Balkan States, just as little as is shown to our own people. Political signals should not be placed in a footnote or in an annex to a European directive or regulation; they need to be formulated properly.

**Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE).** – (PL) Madam President, I am glad that the citizens of Western Balkan countries will be able to move freely around the European Union. This will facilitate interpersonal contact, extend business possibilities and create conditions for the residents of the region to get to know the European Union better.

We cannot, however, allow our Eastern neighbours to be isolated. We cannot deny them the opportunity which we are giving to other European countries. We must establish for them, too, clear criteria and an action plan for greater liberalisation of visa traffic. We have to bear in mind that the cost of a visa is a considerable expense for the residents of these countries, and the application procedures take a long time, which restricts the possibilities for developing a whole range of forms of cooperation.

We should also remember that in 2012, the European football championships will be held in Poland and Ukraine, so the possibility of free movement will be especially important.

**Cristian Dan Preda (PPE).** – (RO) I, too, wish to stress the importance of freedom of movement as a fundamental right, and I reconfirm that numerous citizens from countries in the Western Balkans will enjoy this right. I obviously welcome this openness.

However, at the same time, I wish to deplore the fact that this report ultimately did not feature any reference at all to a country included in the Eastern Partnership. I believe that it needed to be associated with Moldova, if only symbolically. We are talking about Moldova, a country which has made considerable progress on the political front. I think that the most solid wall we know in Europe is on the eastern border, between Romania and Moldova. I believe we must deplore this fact.

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** – (FR) Madam President, my thanks to all of the speakers who have largely supported the process of abolishing visas for three leading Balkan States. You made it clear that freedom of movement was obviously very desirable. As Mr Moraes said, it is beneficial for both parties – for Europe and for the Balkan States.

At the same time as thanking all of the speakers and, in particular, the rapporteur, Mrs Fajon, I would simply like to say, Madam President, that, ever since part of the decisions were pretty much taken for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, we have offered continual assistance to Albania, which I have visited personally, and to Bosnia and Herzegovina, precisely so as to help them make progress – and we shall continue to do so.

I believe that the very swift adoption of this resolution is a good indicator of the way in which we will be able to move on quickly to the other states and, in particular, to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Albania, without forgetting, of course, Kosovo.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

*Vice-President*

**Tanja Fajon, rapporteur.** – Mr President, once again I thank all those who made contributions, which prove that the European Union strongly supports visa liberalisation for all the countries of the Western Balkans.

I regret that the Swedish Minister was not here, because we had very good cooperation. I welcome the Commission's commitment to do everything possible to accelerate the process for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania, and I hope both countries will introduce visa-free regimes once they meet the criteria – as soon as possible, possibly in summer next year.

I want to say that I involved everyone in this, and I am fully aware of what the treaties prescribe. But this is a political House, and we all do serious politics as best we can.

Once again, I welcome the abolition of visas for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro on 19 December, and I really hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania can follow as soon as possible. We are talking about the destiny of the young generation. It is our political responsibility to finish this visa liberalisation process, and we also have to find a solution for all the people in Kosovo.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow at 11.00.



### Written statements (Rule 149)

**Kinga Gál (PPE), in writing.** – (HU) Mr President, Commissioner, let me begin by congratulating the rapporteur and shadow rapporteur for drafting an acceptable compromise on this matter. The issue of providing visa-free travel is only partially a technical one. It is also a very definite political matter. Visa-free travel is based on mutual trust and commitments. This is why I also support the acceptance of the Joint Declaration, in addition to the report, because this signals that the European institutions have understood this responsibility.

Responsibility, of course, also means action. First of all, it means action by the relevant states which have been unable to meet the visa-free travel conditions. They must do their utmost so that these conditions are met as soon as possible. It also means action by the European Commission without whose effective help this process would only drag on, which cannot be in our interest. It also concerns Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo.

As a Hungarian MEP, I would like once again to mention that, thanks to visa-free travel status for Serbia, a more direct link is being established between Hungarians living in Vojvodina in Serbia and the mother country, not to mention with Europe too. Citizens who live on either side of these borders, speak the same language and foster close family and cultural ties are unable, for their part, to find sufficient words to express the importance of being able to cross borders without any barrier or visa. Today we are marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and cutting through the barbed wire. Guaranteeing the crossing of borders in the case of Western Balkan countries becomes part of the series of events that started 20 years ago, like a new wall collapsing

### 21. Medium-term financial assistance for Member States' balances of payments and social conditionality (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Commission, by Tatjana Ždanoka and Jean Lambert, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group, Alejandro Cercas, on behalf of the S&D Group, and Marian Harkin and Elizabeth Lynne, on behalf of the ALDE Group, on medium-term financial assistance for Member States' balances of payments and social conditionality (O-0102/2009 - B7-0215/2009).

**Tatjana Ždanoka, author.** – Mr President, I come from Latvia, a country hit severely by the financial crisis. Latvia was at risk of going bankrupt without financial assistance from outside. We received such assistance from the EU and the IMF. However, as a precondition, the Latvian Government had to cut budgetary spending. It did so by reducing pensions by 10% and the pensions of working pensioners by 70%, reducing family benefits and maternity benefits for working parents by 10%, as well as reducing non-taxable personal income tax thresholds.

The approach, as you see, was an egalitarian one. Whether one's pension was EUR 100 or EUR 1 000, 10% was taken off. The Commission welcomed these cuts which were made in such a scandalous manner, and signed a memorandum of understanding with Latvia. It was clear from the very beginning that such unselective cuts would hit the most vulnerable in society. Is the Commission not aware of the European Year against Poverty?

The Latvian situation is not unique in the Union. Hungary and Romania have also received Community loans. Other countries may one day be forced to apply for such loans. We must therefore avoid creating a precedent of accepting antisocial measures.

Commissioner, of course you can say that you only give the money, and that the governments of the Member States are responsible for social policy, but social rights are legally binding on the institutions of the European Union. This means that everything the institutions do must be measured against social rights. Otherwise, words about a high level of social protection as an EU task will do no more than raise an ironical smile.

**Elizabeth Lynne, author.** – Mr President, this is not about telling Member States exactly what they should or should not be spending their money on. Each country has its own immediate priorities for getting themselves out of their financial difficulties.

But when Member States do receive that aid from the European Union under this provision, they should be encouraged to spend it in a way that respects the principles of the Union – in other words, not ignoring the need for social protection and social inclusion.

This financial crisis has hit people across the European Union hard, and therefore it is right that this fund exists. Millions of people have lost their jobs. Many of those who have become unemployed in those Member States are the most vulnerable and the least likely to find employment quickly. That is why it is important that social safety nets in those Member States are not ignored.

We have asked in our oral question particularly about whether Member States are required to include an evaluation of the social impact in their reports that they submit to the Commission. I would be pleased if you can inform us about whether that is the case.

It is important that we give the right message to Member States that are receiving European funding through the medium-term financial assistance. I believe personally that we must make it clear that the Commission might take into account the way the most vulnerable have been helped, before agreeing any further assistance.

I know that when Member States are in financial difficulties, it is quite often not easy to continue to be aware of their social obligations, hence this oral question. It is so important to remember that this financial crisis has a human face as well and that face is represented quite often by the already most marginalised in society.

**Alejandro Cercas, author.** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, before asking the question, I carefully read the previous questions and the positions that Parliament had taken on those questions. It is a fact, not an opinion, that on 24 April this year, Parliament adopted a legislative resolution with the aim of amending Regulation (EC) No 332/2002 which, under Article 100 of the treaty, governs those financial instruments.

Commissioner, in that resolution, Parliament supported this assistance to tackle the specific public finance problems of those Member States most affected by the financial crisis, it expressed its full solidarity, above all with the states that have most recently joined the EU but, at the same time, Commissioner, Parliament clearly said that this assistance ought to be conditional and set out four criteria, which are the Community objectives.

These are: firstly, that there should be quality in public expenditure, that money should not be wasted; secondly, that social security systems and sustainable growth should be adhered to; thirdly, that the policy of full employment of a decent quality should not be abandoned; and, fourthly, that climate change should be combated. Logically speaking, if these are good objectives for us, they should also be complied with in those countries.

A few months have passed and we have received quite a few reports from NGOs, trade unions and citizens about one of the four countries that have received very significant amounts of assistance to public finances: EUR 6.5 billion, 3.1 billion, 2.2 billion and 5 billion. They are giving us figures such as those which my fellow Member just quoted: cuts of 40% in the education sector; cuts of 10% in the pensions programme; a halving of subsidies for the ill, etc.

Commissioner, in the face of this situation, Parliament wishes, at least, for our silence not to be interpreted there – as it is being interpreted – as if we are the ones imposing these measures; at least, we ought not to be complicit in this interpretation, which sees Europe as attacking these most needy sections of the population. Commissioner, if possible, we ought to avoid a situation where it is the weakest who pay for the adjustment.

**Joaquín Almunia, Member of the Commission.** – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the problems in Latvia, Hungary and Romania, which are the three European Union countries that are currently receiving loans through the balance of payments facility, are problems that have not been created by this Parliament, or the European Commission, or the European Union. They are problems created by the economic crisis, but they have been aggravated by mismanagement and misguided policies undertaken by the political leaders of those countries. I say this because there are countries in the same region of the European Union as Latvia, in the same region of the European Union as Hungary, and in the same region of the European Union as Romania, which are not having the same problems, and which are doing a better job of tackling the crisis, with support from European budgets, through the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, with the protection given by membership of the European Union and prospective membership of the euro, but without the need to ask for assistance from the balance of payments facility.

Why have these three countries had to ask for assistance? Why have we had to lend them money? It is not through the fault of the Commission or Parliament, or the European Union in general: it is because of mismanagement in those countries.

How are we helping them? We are doing so by lending them money; and nobody makes loans without conditions; we do not have the authorisation of this Parliament or of the Council to make loans without

conditions. We are lending upon certain conditions, and we are imposing on those countries some conditions which are tough, because their situations are extraordinarily difficult, but we are saying to them: 'do not make cuts in order to be able to cofinance the Structural Fund and the Cohesion Fund; do not adopt retrogressive measures; do not make cuts that damage the weakest'. Sometimes we are successful and sometimes, unfortunately, we are unsuccessful, because the matter is not in our hands, but in theirs.

Therefore, I share your concerns, and not only do I share them, but also, on behalf of all of you, I am passing them on to those governments at the same time as giving them money in the name of the European Union: EUR 3.1 billion of lending to Latvia, and very large amounts also to Romania and Hungary.

Please note this, however: nobody makes loans without conditions, and I am not authorised to do so on behalf of you, on behalf of the Member States. We cannot, for better or for worse, take decisions which are the responsibility of the governments and parliaments of those countries.

What we do do is to remind the governments and parliaments of those countries, firstly, of their responsibility for extricating their countries from a crisis which other countries are not suffering to such a serious extent; and secondly, that there are measures that cannot be taken, and we are not prepared to lend money so that measures are adopted that go beyond what is strictly necessary to adjust public finances and place those countries in a position to tackle their futures without the need to ask the European Union for loans.

**Jean-Paul Gauzès**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the commissioner's comments just now genuinely answer the question that was asked.

The European Union does not make funds available without conditions. Those conditions have been mentioned: quality of public spending, sustainable development objectives, employment policy, climate change, but also, of course, the need to make up for the shortfalls of the previous administration as quickly as possible, so that these countries that we are helping can reach the level required.

However, in a crisis such as the one we are going through, I believe that we must not go overboard with conditions. We must trust the governments of the Member States that receive European aid to implement the necessary provisions and avoid, as the commissioner said, provisions that could be retrograde or backward-looking.

Social spending is, of course, important – it must be preserved – but here, too, we must trust the Member States to adopt the measures needed to rectify the situation and not carry out nit-picking checks, which would be ineffective anyway.

The time to assess the way in which the Member States have used European aid will be when any new aid is granted, and it is then that we will perhaps be able to draw conclusions from measures that were unsuitable, particularly in the social sphere.

**Pervenche Berès**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, you will very clearly recall that when, on 24 April – as my colleague, Mr Cercas, pointed out – we endorsed, validated and ratified the increase in the balance of payments facility, we did so on two conditions: firstly, that this aid come with conditions attached, particularly in the case of social aid; and, secondly, that there be transparency, so that this House would be clear about the conditions under which such agreements were concluded with the Member States in question. I therefore believe that the debate that we are holding this evening is a just, useful and democratic debate and one which must provide evidence of effective action.

We are in an absolutely critical situation where the European Union is concerned and we can clearly see that this crisis is damaging the very foundations of solidarity among Member States and particularly solidarity towards certain Member States. The situation is only made worse by the news reaching us from Romania, where we are in a very difficult position as a result of the political uncertainty caused by the consequences of this crisis in particular.

However, I would not want us to repeat the mistakes of the past, especially those that we were able to attribute to the IMF which, 10 or so years ago, was applying formulas that were ultimately making things worse. Furthermore, I strongly disagree with my fellow Member, Mr Gauzès, when he recommends not carrying out nit-picking checks but waiting for the next request to examine the quality of aid spending. No! It is when the aid is committed that one can define the conditions, and I feel that Europe has paid enough of a price for not examining the conditionality of aid in many areas to close its eyes in this case.

We cannot accept today, within the European Union, the most vulnerable having to pay for the adjustment policies. I do not believe that it is a case of accusing the Commission of mismanaging Latvian policy. No one in this House indicated to you, Commissioner, that that was the path that we wanted to follow.

However, we cannot allow the most vulnerable to pay the price for the European Union's budget commitment and for our solidarity towards Latvia, because we do not believe that this is the way to restore solidarity and the balance of the Latvian economy.

**Marian Harkin**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the EU's social protection and social inclusion process is core to ensuring the achievement of the European Union's strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

During an economic crisis, there are increased risks of poverty and social exclusion for many citizens, but particularly for those on the margins of society, for those who become unemployed and for those who rely on the various social safety nets that operate within the different Member States.

This question asks the Commission if it is attempting to mainstream the social protection and inclusion process in the provision of medium-term financial assistance for Member States' balances of payments under Council Regulation (EC) No 332/2002.

I am always sensitive to the imposition of too many conditions and excessive red tape on recipients of assistance, and that goes for Member States right down to SMEs and individuals. However, when that imposition would help to realise a core EU principle such as social inclusion, then it is indeed important. We cannot aspire to a social inclusion process and produce lots and lots of documents outlining how to achieve it if, at the same time, we do not ensure that this process is mainstreamed in our initiatives.

The Commissioner says that we have attached harsh conditions to these loans, but I was not exactly clear as to what these conditions are and, indeed, if they include social conditionality.

Regardless of the circumstances whereby EU funds are disbursed, we cannot wash our hands and hope for the best. We have been asked to trust Member States. Trusting Member States is fine, but trust has always to be earned and if there are concerns, I believe they need to be dealt with.

**Patrick Le Hyaric**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, most economists now say that the crisis is largely due to the transfer of wealth created by labour into capital, into profits. Moreover, in general, it is also agreed that it is in the countries that have maintained their social welfare systems and their public services that the populations have suffered relatively less as a result of the crisis.

However, the problem facing us this evening is indeed the nature of the conditions that you attach to the granting of European assistance or International Monetary Fund assistance to the populations. This assistance can no longer be conditional on the application of structural adjustment plans reducing social expenditure, training expenditure, and privatising public sectors, including social services of general interest. It is this that has become ineffective today, and it needs to be recognised. All of this will only make the crisis, unemployment and poverty worse.

This is why, in our view, we have to reverse the criteria of this conditionality and decide that European public funds or IMF funds can be conditioned, can be combined with a new system of appropriations and will be granted in accordance with new criteria aimed at and encouraging a new distribution of wealth so as to increase pay, pensions and minimum social requirements and to maintain a high level of social protection, the guarantee of a job for all. Ultimately, it is social progress that goes hand in hand with economic efficiency, not the other way round.

**Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE)**. – (LV) Mr President, Commissioner, the European Commission has shown clear and cooperative understanding to those Member States that have encountered fiscal difficulties because of the crisis. Stable, strong social support systems cannot be maintained if the Member States do not have strong economies. My fellow Members are proposing to restrict the conditions for offering financial support, but I consider this to be undesirable in principle. Instead, we should give serious consideration to the possibility of extending the conditions under which financial support may be obtained, allowing it to be used not only to reinforce states' budgets and financial systems, but also for the development of the economy.

Investment in the economy is necessary in order to guarantee a stable social support system in the long term. The use of financial aid resources in this way too would be the best way in which to provide help as quickly

as possible to Member States encountering financial difficulties. The recovery of states from the crisis and their further stabilisation is closely linked with European Union policy in relation to those states. Only harmonised and effective action will produce results on an EU-wide scale. Financial aid is not, and cannot be, the only way in which European states can support each other. Complex solutions must be found that will foster the economic development of all the European Union Member States.

**Kinga Göncz (S&D).** – (HU) The countries which we are talking about in this case are the European Union's new Member States which have had, following the changes of regime, to look after those who lost out from the change of regime, become more competitive after economic restructuring in an open market, as well as create and build economies with balanced structures. People have the smallest reserves then in these countries. It means that they are finding it difficult to repay home loans due to the high currency-based debt ratio. Unemployment is rising due to economic problems developing unilaterally and social expenditure is also decreasing.

We can see instability, particularly political instability developing as a result of social tensions. More countries are seeing a rise in support for extremist views, and populism is gaining ground. I think that we must take all these factors into account when assessing the situation and devise what other measures we need to take in relation to European solidarity and which are based on it.

**Jürgen Klute (GUE/NGL).** – (DE) Mr President, the topic we are debating this evening has already been on the European Parliament's agenda many times. It is well-known that, in its granting of aid, the Commission is guided by the conditions of the International Monetary Fund. That has been said a couple of times already.

Against this background, questions have repeatedly been put to the Commission by the European Parliament. In November 2008, the European Parliament called on the Commission to present an analysis of the effects of the behaviour of banks that, at that time, had transferred their assets out of those Member States that had recently acceded to the EU. On 24 April of this year, the European Parliament repeated this request. It also requested to be brought up to speed about the declarations of intent between the Commission and the Member States receiving aid in which the conditions for the aid are laid out in detail. As far as I know, there has, as yet, been no response to these requests.

Thus, my first question is this: is it correct that these requests have, as yet, not been answered? If so, then my second question is: why have these requests not yet been answered? My third question is therefore: when can we expect an answer to these requests?

**Theodor Dumitru Stolojan (PPE).** – (RO) As a representative of Romania, a country which has benefited from financial assistance for its balance of payments from the European Commission, I would like to thank the European Commission for the speedy action it took in granting financial assistance for the balance of payments, without which Romania's economic and social problems would have been much tougher.

Those countries which have received financial assistance certainly have many social problems, and we can discuss what type of social conditionality could be included in these financial assistance agreements. If we present the problem in this manner, we must bear in mind that there are insurance and social assistance systems in these countries which have contributed to the imbalances that required the financial assistance for the balance of payments. This is why if we are discussing social conditionality, we must also discuss the reforms which need to be made to these social sectors, primarily the pensions scheme, so that we can achieve medium and long-term financial sustainability, which will help radically resolve the problems in these countries.

**Proinsias De Rossa (S&D).** – Mr President, the ILO said recently – in June when it launched its global pact for jobs – that the world should look different after the crisis.

I fear that is not what is happening. What we should have at the end of this crisis is a more sustainable economy with decent work, with quality public services and fair globalisation, moving towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. But that is not what we are getting. What we are getting is a retrenchment by the banks and by the financiers in Europe and around the world who are simply trying to retain their privileges.

At the same time that the Commission is sanctioning the pumping of billions of euros into the saving of the Irish banks, we have an Irish Government which is planning this very minute to destroy local development, to destroy community development programmes which are supported by the European Union. They are setting out to destroy our education system.

Today we had the launch by the European Foundation for Living and Working conditions of the report entitled *Restructuring in the Recession*. If I could just quote two lines here: 'Ideally it would be preferable to ensure that measures to address the immediate problems caused by the recession are aligned with long-term goals'. Surely the Commission should be insisting that all Member States should at least seek to do that.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE).** – (PL) At a time of economic crisis, when we are all still feeling its painful effects, many countries have decided to approach a variety of financial institutions with a request for financial assistance. However, it is worth asking what proportion of these not insignificant sums has reached those most affected by the crisis or those most in need in this difficult situation.

Thousands of people in Europe are losing, from one day to the next, the source of their own and their families' livelihood. Do the governments of Member States in any way take into account the social factor when requesting financial aid? This may seem doubtful, when looking at the worsening conditions under which many people are having to live, and the rising unemployment in many European countries. Therefore, I would like to make an appeal that we do not remain indifferent to the needs of ordinary people who, as usual, suffer most acutely from the negative effects of mistakes of those in government.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL).** – (PT) Application of the principle of economic and social cohesion becomes particularly important in crisis situations. It requires not only a significant increase in the Community budget but also a fair sharing of risk, as well as other policies that prioritise protection and social inclusion, the creation of jobs with rights for all, and access to universal, quality public services, so as to guarantee the fundamental rights of all citizens.

Community funding and all proposed economic and financial measures alike should therefore be accompanied by an assessment of their social impact in order to avoid exacerbating inequality and poverty. We hope that after this debate, Commissioner, there will be European Commission initiatives with this objective.

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – Mr President, it is interesting – if somewhat depressing – to listen to the discussion and debate here this evening, particularly when the European Union is acting in good faith in trying to help countries in difficulties.

Our own country, Ireland, has benefited to a certain extent, and particularly the globalisation funds, which should be upcoming, are an example of that. At the same time, one wonders how, when money is made available to these countries under what are described as harsh conditions, there is maladministration taking place. One would imagine that part of those harsh conditions would be to ensure that there would not be maladministration and, if there was, that there would be a correction put in place.

Can the Commission ensure that these funds can either be cut off or withdrawn or some fines or other put in place? Because it is not acceptable that, if something is given – as my colleague, Ms Harkin said – on trust, that trust is not returned.

Secondly – and finally – we will never get to the situation that Proinsias De Rossa spoke about of having a better society post-depression than we have now.

**Joaquín Almunia, Member of the Commission.** – (ES) Mr President, firstly I would like to say that I fully agree with the conditions approved by the European Parliament; that is what the Commission is doing: when it lends money to those three Member States making use of the balance of payments facility, what the Commission does is to take money lent by the markets, and to lend it subject to exactly the same conditions – which are conditions much more favourable for those countries than they could obtain if they went to the market directly to borrow – and to lay down some conditions to ensure that they pay us back the money, but we take into account the four conditions that you mentioned and which this Parliament adopted. We are fully in agreement with them.

When the balance of payments facility is used, however, one should not equate – and it seems to me, from what I understood, that in some of the speeches you were trying to do so – a utilisation of budget resources (Structural Funds, Cohesion Fund, programme of another type, aid) with a loan to solve a financial problem in a country.

Latvia's problem, which is the same problem as Hungary and Romania experienced, is that it has to have recourse to this balance of payments facility because it cannot have recourse to the markets to borrow in order to finance its financial requirements. That is the problem. We are not talking about a programme for a specific activity or for some specific programmes; we are talking about some countries that have a financial

difficulty. In part, of course, this derives from the crisis, but as a result of past mismanagement, it is much greater than in other countries where conditions are, objectively speaking, similar.

Please do not blame the Commission or the European Parliament or the Council of Ministers for mismanagement by some governments in certain Member States. That is not our responsibility; our responsibility is to try to help solve a financial problem. In part, this financial problem is a balance of payments problem that has to do with the indebtedness of the private sector, which has to refinance certain amounts or pay back certain debts and does not have the ability to finance itself to carry out these transactions and, in part, at times, it is a public sector need.

In the case of public sector need, to finance its public debt, there is more scope to impose specific conditions, and we do impose them, believe me. The day before yesterday, here in Brussels, I was still trying to convince a representative of Latvia's Government to make the measures to be included in the budget for 2010 more progressive. However, please do not ask the Commission to compel a country to adopt a tax reform which that country does not wish to adopt; for better or for worse, and you know this as well as I do. We do not have that ability.

What is our alternative, then, as representatives of European citizens? To leave the country to collapse into insolvency? To default on its external commitments, whether these are public or private debts? For these financial problems to force the country to devalue its currency by 25 or 30%, which would immediately impoverish families, businesses and the public sector, with debts in foreign currency? I am sure that you do not want that, and nor do I. These are the conditions within which we are working.

I share all your analyses: those of Mr De Rossa, those of Mr Cercas, those of Mrs Berès, all of you; of course I share them. The situation on the ground in a country such as Latvia or Romania, however, at the moment, is more complicated than that. Please, put yourselves in the place of someone who has to act in the name of all of you to decide whether or not to lend to a country that cannot borrow on the markets, as the majority of the Member States can, or as the most industrialised countries can. That is the situation. That is what we are trying to resolve, while meeting the four conditions that you have imposed and which I endorse.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The global financial crisis has had a deep, global effect on the movement of people across the world. Against this backdrop, greater political and social integration is required, with a stronger and more unified Europe. The European Union has to guarantee protection of all fundamental rights within its own area, otherwise it cannot preach a policy that it does not practise. I am therefore in favour of a new concept of solidarity in the European Union, which can guarantee the minimum social rights for every European citizen. For example, minimum standards are required in the areas of health, education and state pensions and benefits, which should be guaranteed at European level. I believe it is vital to establish these minimum standards since they promote greater uniformity of working conditions, which has a regulating effect on the movement of businesses and labour. Clearly, EU financial support cannot, on the one hand, be subject to policies that are the exclusive responsibility of the Member States, nor, on the other, can it subject these same policies to conditions. This does not mean, however, that better political and social coordination is not required. On the contrary, this integration is vital.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D), in writing.** – (RO) The financial crisis has obliged some Member States to call on assistance from the EU (Council Regulation No 332/2002(1) of 18 February 2002) and from the international community (International Monetary Fund). This support must be geared towards both ensuring that appropriate conditions exist for providing social protection and inclusion and implementing a framework conducive to economic development and the creation of new jobs. In the period between March 2008 and May 2009, the rate of unemployment in the EU27 reached 8.9%, with the number of unemployed rising from 5.4 million to 21.5 million. Job losses are the main concern of European citizens. The European Union and its Member States must be able to retain existing jobs and create other new jobs. This can be done through effective investments in agriculture, education and health, as well as in the transport and energy infrastructure. For every European citizen who loses his or her job, this represents a European family with a lower income and, by extension, a drop in their quality of life. Every job created means a family with a decent living and good-quality education for the younger generation. The success of the European model is measured by the quality of life of Europe's 500 million citizens.

## 22. Political situation in Honduras with a view to the elections on 29 November 2009 (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Commission statement on the political situation in Honduras with a view to the elections on 29 November 2009.

**Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, we are here today to discuss the important latest developments in the political crisis in Honduras.

Four months after the removal of President Zelaya, the political crisis in Honduras unfortunately still remains unresolved, despite the agreement that was signed on 30 October by the committees representing the President and the *de facto* government.

The implementation of the so-called San José Agreement, which should provide the necessary framework and conditions to restore democracy and the constitutional order in Honduras, has not progressed after the National Unity Government nominated on 5 November was rejected by President Zelaya. In addition, the Congress has still not decided on his reinstitution, which is threatening recognition of the legitimacy of the general elections on 29 November – the key element for exiting from the crisis.

Therefore, together with the Presidency, we have urged all parties to implement without further delay all the provisions of the agreement as a precondition for the return to normal of our relationship, including our development cooperation.

The European Commission to date has fully supported the mediation and facilitation efforts made by Costa Rican President, Oscar Arias, and by the Organisation of American States and the measures implemented by the international community to exert pressure on the parties to find a peaceful solution. The Ambassador of the EU Presidency was recalled for consultations and all other EU ambassadors have also left the country. Budgetary support payments, as well as development cooperation – with the exception of cooperation with the civil society and that of a humanitarian nature – have been suspended. In addition, the foreseen electoral observation mission for the general elections on 29 November was cancelled.

We are taking this crisis very seriously as it represents a step backwards, in democratic terms, not only for Honduras and the rest of Central America, but for the whole of Latin America.

I want to reiterate here today that the Commission will support the normalisation of the political situation in Honduras, and for this we need the parties to adhere to the agreement. Although, owing to the limited time available, it is no longer possible to send an electoral observation mission, the Commission did send two election experts, seconded to the EC Delegation as of 9 November, for a five week period with a mandate to report on aspects of the electoral process and to advise on possible post-electoral actions as well. Should the political situation allow for more active engagement in support of the electoral process, the Commission has also envisaged financial support to the election tribunal under a contract with UNDP. The Commission also stands ready to provide financial support to OAS if the conditions for the electoral observations are there.

We are continuing to monitor the situation, and support all efforts in order to help re-establish democracy in Honduras.

**Alojz Peterle, on behalf of the PPE Group.** – (SL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, as a member of a special delegation of the European People's Party, I had the opportunity over a month ago of thoroughly familiarising myself with the political situation in Honduras. Our delegation first visited Mr Arias, President of Costa Rica and internationally recognised mediator in the crisis, who presented the San José Agreement to us.

In Honduras, we met the incumbent, President Micheletti, the ousted President Zelaya, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, judges of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the President of the National Congress, the Public Prosecutor, as well as four presidential candidates and other important figures. Both parties welcomed our mission and expressed their readiness to engage in mutual dialogue.

Irrespective of the different interpretations of the events of late June this year, I should like to point out that there has been no escalation in violence since the removal of President Zelaya, which was backed by a Supreme Court decision. In our talks, we upheld the importance of political dialogue, in the spirit of President Arias's



proposal. Internal dialogue did take place later on, but has, regrettably, not yet produced a final outcome. I still, however, believe that we should continue to push for a political agreement in this country.

We learned from our talks with the key political actors that the 29 November elections are not a consequence of the political change, but that, on the contrary, they were called by an autonomous decision of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal some time earlier, at a time when President Zelaya was still in power. After the events in June, no new candidates have expressed a desire to stand for president. In fact, the presidential candidates have themselves stressed that they have no concerns that the political crisis might throw the legitimacy of the presidential elections into doubt, as the preparations commenced on the basis of democratic decisions.

Honduras is one of the Central American countries with which the European Union wishes to conclude an association agreement. However, the political crisis has disrupted the negotiation process. Given that the continued democratic development of Honduras is in the interests of the European Union, it seems to me to be important that the European Parliament send its observers to monitor the presidential elections.

**Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo García**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, having listened to the Commissioner, there would really be nothing left for me to say but ‘amen’, but I already had a speech prepared on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

The breakdown of constitutional order in Honduras brings an end to two decades without coups in Latin America and creates a bad precedent for other countries, and especially the weakest ones, such as Paraguay, currently.

The European Parliament cannot and should not remain deaf and mute in the face of such a violation of the rule of law. Both the Council and the Commission have made unambiguous statements condemning the coup and supporting the mediation by President Arias in line with the position unanimously adopted by the OAS, with the backing of the United Nations.

The self-proclaimed *de facto* president, Mr Micheletti, has not abided by the agreements reached recently, mocking the international community, and one of his moves has been to prevent Mr Zelaya, the deposed president, from being reinstated.

Under the current circumstances, the election of a new president at the elections scheduled for 29 November would be devoid of legitimacy from the outset, and its results cannot and should not be recognised by the international community.

The European Parliament would be committing a grave error if it sent a delegation to observe the elections, since this would be interpreted as support for the *coup d'état*; the OAS has already ruled out sending an observation mission to the elections.

This Parliament has described itself as a guarantor of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. As Václav Havel said this morning, we cannot have double standards. Here, we are all democrats and, therefore, fighters for freedom. Consequently, whether we are talking of Cuba, China, North Korea or, as now, Honduras, our debate must be resolute in the face of destroyers of freedom. Let us not allow ourselves to be blinded by our ideological preferences. There are no right-wing or left-wing coup leaders or dictators, merely repressive and freedom-destroying ones.

We very much fear that things in Honduras are not going to change and that these events will have created a very dangerous precedent, and that the doctrine of the good, timely and not overly bloody coup will have triumphed.

**Izaskun Bilbao Barandica**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, on 30 October, the parties in this conflict signed an agreement, the San José Agreement, and decided that by 5 November, a national unity and reconciliation government would be created and that Congress would reinstate Mr Zelaya until the current period of government ends, on 27 January 2010.

What has happened, though? Mr Micheletti has tried to form a government of unity without the participation of Mr Zelaya and Congress has delayed the vote in order not to reinstate him. Mr Micheletti has not complied with the agreement, and the situation is getting worse. Elections have been called and candidates are withdrawing, as we are seeing in all the media, because they can see that the democratic conditions do not exist in which to hold elections. Violence is also occurring: today we were informed that a mayor from the opposition party and a guard had been shot dead.

International involvement continues to be necessary and we support the actions taken by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, President Lula, the mediating mission of the United States and the mediator, Mr Arias. Through all these actions, we are demanding compliance with the agreements and the reinstatement of Mr Zelaya so that democracy, institutional legitimacy and peaceful coexistence between Hondurans can be re-established.

We are calling on the parties to show their generosity by returning to dialogue, even though the OAS has already said that this is becoming increasingly difficult. Mr President, Europe must add its voice to the international pressure on the coup leaders by using all the diplomatic and political actions that are available to it in order to promote agreement.

**Catherine Greze**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, following a military *coup d'état* and the dismissal of the legitimate president, the San José Agreement might have seemed like a welcome piece of news. That hope is now dead. By forming his own government of national unity, the putschist Roberto Micheletti has persisted in his illegal and authoritarian activities. The European Union must strongly condemn this attitude and call for President Zelaya's immediate reinstatement.

In the current situation, one cannot have elections organised by an illegal dictatorship. The elections of 29 November cannot be recognised. Even though the Organization of American States has already done so, we must refuse to send observers. Even though the opposition has stood down, we refuse to acknowledge the result of the elections, which have become puppet elections.

We are concerned about the numerous human rights violations being reported to us. Now more than ever Europe must take a firm stance on democracy. We reject any agreement with an illegal government. The GSP+ agreements must be suspended. If the conflict continues, the time will have to come for sanctions. We have a responsibility to ensure that millions of Hondurans can choose democracy and that Latin America does not sink back into the era of *pronunciamientos*.

**Edvard Kožušník**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (CS) Mr President, Commissioner, I hold Mr Yañeze in very high regard, even to the extent of following his career, but I cannot agree with the way he has used the words of Václav Havel, for whom everyone in this Chamber has the highest regard. I was one of those millions of people on the streets when Václav Havel spoke from the podium and we stood below – I was 18 years old at the time – wanting only one thing, regardless of our political views, and that was free elections. That was the slogan of the time and I think it was a slogan we will surely all agree with. We talk about elections because elections are democracy. In my opinion, the situation in Honduras is not simple and we will definitely not resolve it from an EU perspective alone: we must look at it from a global perspective. In my opinion, the elections should be a starting point and the EU should have its observers there because elections will be held and we must hope that they will be held in a democratic way.

**Ilda Figueiredo**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) We condemn the military coup that took place in Honduras on 28 June, as well as the persistent violation by those who carried out the coup of the Tegucigalpa/San José Agreement of 30 October. It is unacceptable that those who carried out the coup are clearly pursuing a strategy of systematic delays and excuses to postpone restoration of power to the constitutionally elected President Zelaya.

The European Union must demand the unconditional and immediate reinstatement of President Zelaya. Without that, it is impossible to continue with the electoral process, since it becomes unworkable and illegitimate, given that the minimum conditions are not in place to guarantee citizens the universal right to vote directly, confidentially and free of coercion or any kind of threat. The European Union and this Parliament must be clear in condemning and rejecting the positions of those who carried out the coup. They must also demand the immediate restoration of democracy in Honduras and agree not to send European observers or to accept the results of any elections held in these circumstances.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE)**. – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, elections can be a way out of a political crisis or impasse. We have had examples of this in Europe in the past.

The elections in Poland in 1989 are an example. They were not democratic elections. They were elections which represented a political compromise, but they were not democratic elections. They were decisive, specific and very important. For elections to fulfil such a specific, positive role, certain conditions must be met. A basic condition is the consistent abidance by the political understandings which allowed the elections to be held in the first place. The most common obstacle to abiding by understandings are questions of interpretation of the things which have been agreed.

To prevent differences in interpretation from leading to conflict, something special is needed, something which is barely perceptible and hard to define. The good will of both parties in the dispute is necessary, and this is true in the case of Honduras. Without the good will of both sides, the elections will not be held at all, or they will not come up to the hopes being placed in them. I appeal, therefore, for good will, for consideration of the future, and, at the very least, for responsibility. This is all the more important because in the past, both Mr Zelaya and Mr Micheletti have made political and legal errors. The elections provide opportunity and hope for the amendment of these errors. I am sure that we want this to happen.

The elections can be decisive and positive for a democratic Honduras. The European Union supports this process and is pleased with it. We all support this process, because we believe that democracy and democratisation are values which are worth striving for. Today in this Chamber, Václav Havel said we must not retreat in the face of evil, because it is in the nature of evil to take advantage of every concession. The current situation in Honduras is temporary, and cannot last long. The elections are an opportunity for change.

**Emine Bozkurt (S&D).** – (NL) Mr President, on 28 June, President Zelaya, the legally elected president of Honduras, was deposed by the army. I condemn this military coup in the strongest terms. The democratic rule of law must be restored in Honduras, and this must be done peacefully, by means of dialogue.

Almost two weeks ago – coincidentally at the very time our Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America was visiting the region – it seemed that, following months of intensive negotiations, an historic agreement had been reached through dialogue in Honduras that would mean the restoration of democracy and the rule of law, the return of the legally elected president and the establishment of a government of national unity, and finally, also a truth commission to examine the situation. This agreement, if implemented, would confer legitimacy on the forthcoming elections, but it is currently off the table.

I want to give voice to the express wish that the parties concerned in Honduras return to the negotiating table to implement the agreement that was reached; to reverse the military coup by means of dialogue. This is their duty to the Honduran people, who are the ones most affected by this political crisis. If a democratic solution should not be reached, it currently looks as though the elections will not be broadly recognised. This would have far-reaching consequences for the process of Central American integration and for the negotiations on an association agreement, meaning many years of stagnation, with the people the ones to suffer.

I have the following to say to those fellow Members who are already suggesting recognising the forthcoming elections: we must not send out a signal to Honduras, Central America and the rest of the world that we tolerate *coups d'état*. At this time, those involved need to be directing all their energy towards restoring democracy. If MEPs state in advance that support for the elections will be forthcoming, neither Manuel Zelaya nor Roberto Micheletti will have any incentive to return to the negotiating table. This would make us part of the problem rather than of the solution, and we would play into the hands of undemocratic forces and of discord.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL).** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, I congratulate the European Commission and the Council on having achieved unanimity, together with the international community, on a very firm position of condemnation of the *coup d'état*, the military coup, and making any international measure conditional on the unconditional reinstatement of President Zelaya.

I deeply regret the fact that this Parliament has not yet condemned the military coup. I would like to point to the responsibility of the largest parliamentary group in Europe, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), which, even in today's debates, continues to consider that the coup leaders and the legitimate government amount to the same thing. It is unacceptable that this Parliament has not yet condemned the *coup d'état*. Therefore, I agree that observers cannot be sent and that the result of the November elections cannot be recognised, because they are being carried out under conditions of lack of freedom and with a legitimate president who is confined to the Brazilian embassy.

**Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, I would be pleased if certain left-wing Members of this Parliament who are issuing resolute condemnations of Honduras would issue similarly forceful condemnations of what is happening in Cuba, or what Mr Chávez is doing in Venezuela and in Latin America, because, unfortunately, some people still hanker after and support the Berlin Wall, the purges of Stalin and even the mummy of Lenin more than democratic elections in a country, as in this case in Honduras. Having said this, with the forthcoming elections, some serious thought should be given to what has happened in this Central American country.

Mr President, presidential elections in Honduras were called 16 months ago. The members of the electoral court, which is the body responsible for managing elections, were appointed before 28 June – they were therefore appointed under Mr Zelaya's mandate. The six presidential candidates went through the primaries procedure, and the majority of the candidates want the elections in Honduras to be held.

Therefore, why do some people not want to recognise the electoral process, if it was the natural outcome, whether or not Mr Zelaya was in power in Honduras?

On 30 October, the negotiators of both sides made a commitment, it is true, by signing an agreement, to seek a solution to the crisis. The agreement contained a set of key points supported by both sides. The negotiators of the deposed President Zelaya did not establish, however, who should head the government of unity.

It is therefore clear that the European People's Party is in favour of the elections being held, under conditions of transparency, democracy and freedom, and we are going to support them with observers from our group. Let us not forget that it was the mediator, Óscar Arias, President of Costa Rica, who requested that they should go. In reply to a question from the delegation for Central America, he answered that it was necessary to send them, because the Óscar Arias Foundation itself was going to send observers to Honduras. We are going to do precisely that, because the international mediator, Óscar Arias, is also requesting it.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I think the elections on 29 November are an opportunity for Honduras, and the European Parliament is obliged to send observers to the elections. This would not be to legitimise them, as the Left are saying, because that would be illegal, but to see how the elections are conducted.

At the same time, I would like to say that Honduras is only a one-hour flight away from Cuba, from Havana. No elections have been held there for 50 years. Cuba is ruled by a communist tyrant who puts all his opponents in prison. The European Parliament has called for their release many times, and even awarded the Sakharov Prize to the 'Ladies in White', but Fidel Castro did not allow them to visit the European Parliament to collect the award. I would like the Commission, the Council and the left-hand side of this Chamber to demand rights and liberties for the citizens of Cuba with equal resoluteness.

**Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my extreme concern regarding the suspension of the San José Agreement. At the meetings of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly held in Panama in late October, we reiterated our condemnation of the military coup and our support for the mediation efforts of the OAS.

We must make fresh urgent calls for peace and dialogue. The situation in Honduras is critical, not only politically, but also in social and economic terms. Problems such as poverty, the economic crisis and external debt must not be allowed to suffer additional delay through the process of resolving the political conflict.

Now is the time for the European Parliament to show more than ever its unconditional support for democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, reinstating Mr Zelaya as an indispensable precondition for the legitimacy of the electoral process.

**Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, on the day on which Václav Havel spoke in this House about the freedom that was fought for 20 years ago in Eastern Europe, I would like to ask all of those from the ranks of the Group of the European People's Party who have pleaded today for the European Union to send election observers to Honduras what they would have done if, more than 20 years ago, the European Union had declared that it was sending election observers to monitor an illegitimate election in their country – where everyone had said there was no freedom and a climate of violence, and that there was a lack of security. What would you have said then, more than 20 years ago, if the EU had declared, 'yes, we are sending election observers there because the regime currently in office says that is alright'?

You would all have said that it is unlawful for the European Union to send election observers there. For that reason, ladies and gentlemen of the EPP, I ask you today to use precisely the same criteria in respect of what is currently happening in Honduras. In other words, do not send election observers there for an illegitimate election.

I am grateful to the Commission for taking precisely this position.

**Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I will be relatively brief – not because I do not recognise the importance of the issue, but rather because of the lateness of the hour.

I have listened with great interest to the passion with which honourable Members have spoken and the concerns that have been raised about the relationship that we need to have in the short term with this extremely poor country that, frankly, needs to move back to normality as quickly as possible.

The concern that honourable Members from different persuasions have about making sure that the role that we play in the European Union in the forthcoming elections and the weeks ahead is the right one. That I will take back and will deliberate on with colleagues.

Not surprisingly, it is very important, in my view, that we continue to monitor the situation in Honduras very closely to make sure that we are aware of what is happening and to take the necessary measures and provide the support to try and get to a peaceful solution to this crisis as quickly as we possibly can.

As I said, this is a poor country. The resolution of this crisis is long overdue, and I very much welcome the support shown by honourable Members to the Commission for the work that we are trying to do to reach that conclusion and to play our part in making sure that Honduras is able to get back to stability as quickly as possible.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), in writing.** – Much of the debate about Honduras is focussed, understandably, on the political crisis – but the effects go far beyond politics. Honduras is the second poorest country in Latin America, and the economic and social impacts of the political crisis are hitting the 70 percent of the population which already lives in poverty. Tourism has almost stopped, the suspension of foreign aid is having a direct effect on public investment, and overstretched and underequipped hospitals are struggling to cope, not just with the usual problems caused by poor sanitation, malnutrition and disease, but now also with the victims of increased street violence, including beatings and even killings by government forces. Human rights and development organisations cannot do their valuable work because their staff are not protected by normal constitutional rights. Instead, they face a curfew, detention without charge, and other violations of individual freedoms. This crisis extends far beyond the political deadlock and the battles between key political figures. It is about ordinary people whose day-to-day struggle has been made even harder during the last four months. Every effort must be made to ensure free and fair elections and the immediate resumption of constitutional rights and foreign aid to alleviate the suffering of ordinary people.

### **23. ‘made in’ (origin marking) (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the Commission statement on ‘made in’ (origin marking).

**Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I am happy to have the opportunity today to address you in plenary session on the proposal for a regulation on origin marking. This is a proposal which honourable Members may recall the Parliament has been a strong supporter of since its adoption by the College as long ago as December 2005. I particularly recall your resolution of July 2006 and the written declaration of September 2007. I was privileged to discuss this issue last month in Strasbourg with a group of MEPs who stressed to me the need to move rapidly to adopt this regulation.

I think honourable Members would agree that it is of fundamental importance that trade policy not only strengthens the opportunities that open markets can offer but also addresses the concerns globalisation generates not just for consumers, but also, and perhaps particularly, for small enterprises.

Origin marking should therefore be considered in that spirit. In the 2007 declaration, you emphasised the right of European consumers to have clear and immediate information about their purchases. That is precisely what this regulation is about. It aims to allow EU consumers to be fully aware of the country of origin of the products that they purchase.

The Commission has proposed a compulsory indication of the country of origin of certain products imported into the European Union from third countries. Not all products are covered – we focused on those of real interest, following a broad consultation with consumers and with industry.

Origin marking, I might add, is fully in line with the current WTO rules and principles and something that exists almost everywhere in the world. Imports into the United States, into Canada, China and Japan are subject to country of origin marking. As a matter of fact, most products that you can currently purchase in

shops in the European Union already bear the country of origin mark, as most legal systems currently require it. This means, of course, that for the vast majority of businesses, an obligation to mark products exported to the European Union will entail no additional cost.

Since 2006, discussions have been held in Council in order to reach an agreement on the Commission proposal. A number of Member States remain to be convinced. They are worried that the administrative burden and the costs of an origin marking scheme may outweigh the benefits.

We have taken due note of those concerns, and we have recently presented concrete options that we believe address those issues. This is not a new formal proposal; it is an attempt to find common ground and reach a compromise. A Commission options paper was discussed with the Member States in the Article 133 Committee on 23 October 2009.

First of all, the Commission asked the Member States to consider the option of narrowing the product coverage – so as to include only end-consumer goods. The original list contained some intermediate products, such as raw skin and certain textiles, that are not of direct interest to the consumer. The Commission suggests now to include only those goods that consumers can find in retail stores.

Secondly, the Commission suggested that the scheme be launched on a pilot project basis. Any continuation would be subject to an evaluation of the impact the proposed scheme had. This would allow for an assessment of the impact on cost and on price – it may also, of course, give some indication of how we could modify the product coverage of the regulation.

I am pleased to say that the Member States have received our options paper with interest. Although not all doubts have been resolved and several Member States have maintained their opposition in principle to this proposal, they are ready to study the issue further and the work will continue over the next few weeks at both experts meetings level and in the Article 133 Committee. I sincerely hope this will clear the way for a compromise solution.

As honourable Members know, the new Article 207 of the Treaty of Lisbon gives Parliament new and increased authority on legislative measures in the field of trade policy – and the ‘made in’ regulation could be one of the first to appear on honourable Members’ desks.

I am therefore very interested in keeping you closely involved in the further discussions on this important subject, and look forward to our brief debate now.

**Cristiana Muscardini**, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, certain problems affect us too, not just the interpreters and those who want to follow the debate and hopefully receive some concrete answers in relation to a problem that has been dragging on since 2005.

As the Commissioner has rightly pointed out, for many years, our main competitors and economic partners have had origin marking for goods that enter their territory. However, the European Union, in spite of the 2005 proposal for a regulation, which was broadly supported by consumers, by categories of civil society, still lacks a definition, in spite of the favourable opinion expressed many times by Parliament. The lack of a regulation on the designation of origin of goods undermines the right of citizens and consumers and prevents the proper functioning of the market, which, to be free, must have common and shared rules.

The Article 133 Committee has examined in the last few days ideas for reducing the categories of goods included in the regulation, and the grounds for recommending their application for a trial period. We ask the Commissioner: are these compromise proposals endorsed by at least some of the Member States? Will further consideration be given to them? Do you intend to continue to support the 2005 proposal for a regulation, together with Parliament and as part of the codecision procedure? What guarantees and timetables is the Commission offering at the end of this difficult and belated debate? Lastly, Commissioner, while I thank you in any case for what you have done with great energy and determination, can you confirm to me what you wrote in your reply to my question on 5 November 2009, namely that the Commission will continue strongly to support the adoption of the proposal submitted in 2005 and that it will continue to honour its commitment?

**Gianluca Susta**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I certainly do not intend at this time – even with the time available to me – to go back over all of the reasons behind the repeated request that we, as Parliament, are making. I would point out – and you yourself have already made this point, Commissioner – that Mrs Muscardini and I are the only two veterans of 2006, of the signing of the

resolution with which this Parliament endorsed the initiative of the then Commissioner Mandelson in December 2006.

We hoped that the initiative that you undertook a few weeks ago to make small changes in order to achieve a compromise could have been supported more strongly, including within the Article 133 Committee. Among other things we regret that, within that committee, many countries reiterated their opposition or misgivings, including the United Kingdom, via its representative. All that we want to do today is to remind you that this request is not about protectionism; it is not industries that are no longer able to compete on the international market that we want to defend, but consumers: we want to draw attention to the theme of health, the environment and genuine reciprocity on the world market, which is lacking today. Moreover, it is not only lacking with regard to the weakest subjects in the world: no, it is also lacking with regard to Japan, to the United States, to Australia, to Canada, to Brazil, to India, to the main competitors of the European Union, which has a duty, in these economically difficult times, to defend the Community interest, which is also behind this request.

We therefore hope that Parliament will throw its full weight behind the initiatives that the Commission provides and we also hope that the commitments made a few weeks ago will be fully honoured, even if this procedure cannot be wound up by Christmas but under the new procedure introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon.

**Niccolò Rinaldi**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, endorsing the comments made by the Members who spoke before me and also espousing the requests made by Mrs Muscardini, I would like to recall an image from a book by Italo Calvino entitled *Cosmicomics*, in which the big bang is described as an indistinct mass of matter in which nothing is known about anyone or about anyone's origins. At a certain point, a woman says that if she had some room, she could make some pasta and pizza for the people present. This generates great enthusiasm within the mass of matter: there is an explosion, and the desired space materialises as a world made up of differences, which is today's universe.

I believe that, in our global market, we are going backwards, reverting to an indistinct mass of goods, the origin of which and, of course, the characteristics with which they have been made, elude consumers. As liberals and democrats, we are deeply attached to the system and the principle of free trade, but also to that of transparency and the traceability of goods. As has already been said, this is not so much an issue of international trade as an issue of consumer protection. We renew our support for the 2005 proposal and – I repeat – I support the requests made by Mrs Muscardini.

**Carl Schlyter**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (SV) Mr President, thank you, Commissioner, for tabling a proposal at last. I think that the Barroso Commission has all too often not dared to challenge the Council when the Council was seeking to move backwards instead of forwards, but now the Commission has done just that. Thank you. Adam Smith observed that a market economy cannot function if consumers do not receive sufficient information to be able to make choices when they buy products and it is therefore absolutely necessary for us to have this origin marking.

There should be no exceptions for those countries that have entered into a free trade agreement or some other arrangement with the EU; the same rules should apply to everyone. There are those who claim that marking is costly, but many products are already marked, so the additional costs should be minimal. We have already seen this in the more detailed marking of beef in Europe – it is not expensive at all. However, I think that the list could be made longer. It seems to be mostly focussed on products that are often copied and where everyone has an interest in the industry. At the same time, many important consumer products are missing and I think, therefore, that the list should be extended.

**Helmut Scholz**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – Mr President, my group, the GUE/NGL Group, considers that the 'made in' origin marking of products which come from outside the EU is an urgent necessity for the European Union. In a largely globalised and deregulated world, it is absolutely necessary to enable consumers to know where a product comes from and what they are buying.

I think this is an area where citizens and consumers really understand what Europe is, and how Europe can contribute to international trade and the world outside. I agree with my colleagues that we should adopt the 2005 approach to origin marking. In our view, that is the very minimum that should be ensured for the European consumers and citizens. It could also favour the small and medium-sized industries of Europe.

We call on the Commission and on the Council to submit this quickly for consideration by the European Parliament. Among other things, it is a matter of a coherent approach to policy making, and I think that in this area, international trade can also contribute to international peace.

**Lara Comi (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we are part of an industrial system, at European level, in which the good reputation of goods greatly depends on the integrity of the production system. By keeping at least part of our manufacturing in Europe, we can genuinely offer our consumers controlled, high-quality goods. It is in all of our interests to continue to do so, giving consumers the opportunity of being fully aware of what we are producing and of the origin of the goods produced. In order to meet this objective, we need something very simple but crucial: transparency, a concept that underpins the rules on origin marking, which were already approved by Parliament in 2006 and which, as the Commissioner mentioned earlier, are already largely in use in the main world markets, such as the United States, Mexico and China.

In spite of this, the 'made in' origin mark has still not been approved by some EU Member States. We believe that, if a product is made in China, or in any other non-European country, regardless of its quality – which is also often high – European consumers must be able to know where the product was made so that they can make an informed choice. Some people might interpret the need for transparency as excessive protectionism and believe that all of this may result in increased costs for industry: well, that is absolutely not the case.

The absence of origin marks on goods imported into Europe, unlike what happens in China, the United States and Australia, makes it more difficult for European goods to compete in a globalised international market. For all of these reasons, safeguarding the idea of goods produced using the best of what Europe has to offer is the first crucial step towards recognition at individual Member State level.

**Kader Arif (S&D).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, this is not our first debate on origin marking but, as I am sure that repetition has its benefits, I will take the liberty of joining my fellow Members in stressing the need for European legislation on 'made in' origin marking.

Indeed, in spite of the opinion expressed by this House in 2005, then in 2007, via the vote on the resolution by our colleague, Mr Barón Crespo, the lack of a majority within the Council has always prevented the adoption of this regulation.

However, a text such as this would represent a crucial advance, not only for European consumers, but also for our industries. Indeed, by indicating the country of origin of certain products imported from third countries, consumers would be fully informed of the characteristics of the product they are buying. In such sensitive sectors as clothing, leather goods and furniture, creating the conditions for consumers to make an informed choice is a major issue for those companies that have taken the decision to maintain production in Europe, preserving European knowledge and European jobs.

I therefore welcome the proposal that you have just made, Commissioner, but I am anxious to stress that this proposal must remain ambitious. Seeking the support of a majority of Member States must not be done at the expense of our ultimate goal. For example, it would be unacceptable for origin marking to concern only finished products, thus making it possible to import all the components separately, to assemble them in Europe and to describe them as being 'made in Europe'.

Moreover, I would like to support the Commission's efforts to derive maximum benefit from such an agreement. Therefore, without coming back to a repeated request to improve and to simplify the rules of origin, the possibility of creating a pan-Euro-Mediterranean mark would be a significant advance in terms of strengthening sectors built around the Mediterranean and South-South trade.

Lastly, I should like to stress that, as part of the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Committee on International Trade will see its powers substantially increased. The Commission will therefore be able to count – I assure you, Commissioner – on the full commitment of MEPs to monitor closely the discussions on this crucial regulation for European consumers and workers.

**Jacky Hénin (GUE/NGL).** – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the 'made in' concept must not simply be about marking. It must quickly become a powerful concept of respect for the most advanced rules in relation to knowledge, employee rights, sustainable development and environmental protection, and the expression of a responsible economic attitude.



While globalisation creates the conditions for everyone to be able to produce, the frantic quest solely for profit means that the rights of workers and populations are constantly being infringed, and their environment is being destroyed. Copying, which used to concern only luxury brands, now affects sectors as diverse as the pharmaceutical, car and aeronautical sectors, with the notion of profit always in the background, whereas consumer safety is being seriously undermined. At the same time, tens of thousands of jobs are disappearing.

With the introduction of a 'made in Europe' concept, we could enable consumers to make an informed choice, to take action to gain new rights. Yes to respect for workers' rights and for environmental rules, for our skills and for responsible management. And, finally and most importantly, yes to maintaining and defending industrial jobs in Europe.

**Christofer Fjellner (PPE).** – (SV) Mr President, protectionists rarely admit that their proposals are protectionist, but rather hide their intentions behind other arguments. I would say that mandatory origin marking is a clear example of this. In June 2006, I stood here in this Chamber and quashed a number of myths concerning this very same proposal, and on that occasion the proposal ended up where it belongs – in the bin.

However, the horse-trading prior to the decision on the free trade agreement with Korea has resulted in us debating this proposal once again, and this is an inappropriate way to deal with this type of proposal. Three years later, a few myths are clearly still alive and well, and they need to be quashed.

Let us start, therefore, with the first one that is claimed time and again, namely that consumers are asking for this, and here the advocates claim to be supported by the Commission's Internet consultation in this regard. However, they neglect to mention that 96.7% of the responses to the consultation came from a single country, namely Italy, where industry and organised special interest groups are the driving force on this issue. Today, it is possible for anyone who so wishes to origin-mark his or her goods, and, believe me, any competitive company that can envisage gaining customers in this way will already be doing this, so it is not needed.

The second myth is that the marking provides consumers with relevant information and consumer protection and is beneficial to the environment, as if it were a question of geography. No, this is merely playing on people's prejudices, not protecting people. The third myth is that the marking increases European competitiveness. However, new technical barriers to trade do not protect European industry. It has nothing to do with competitiveness – that is only strengthened by open markets and a good business environment.

If we prohibit Member States from permitting this type of legislation within the EU because it is protectionist, why are we then to apply the same rules towards the rest of the world without acknowledging that it is protectionism? We dismissed the idea of introducing a mandatory 'made in the EU' marking, and so it would be unreasonable now to introduce this in relation to the rest of the world.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE).** – Mr President, in many cases, we already have country of origin labelling for food and other products, so this is not new. The trouble with some of the labelling of food products is that it is not always accurate, so, whatever we do on this proposal, let us be able to test the veracity of a label, i.e. that what it says on the label is accurate, so that consumers can get the information that they are looking for.

One specific question: I had a call from a manufacturer who works within the European Union asking me if the Commission, Council and Parliament are looking at a 'made in the European Union' label which would enable them to promote the fact that they are producing within the European Union. Could the Commissioner perhaps address that point for me please?

**Seán Kelly (PPE).** – Mr President, this whole matter has caused a lot of problems, particularly in the agricultural sector in Ireland. Almost every time I hear the leader of the Farmers' Union, Pdraig Walshe, speak, he refers to the difficulty of having proper, accurate labelling, as Mrs McGuinness said.

It seems that products can be imported into Ireland, reprocessed by adding spices or whatever to them, and passed off as of Irish origin. This is a gross deception of the consumer, and I think that everybody is entitled to know the country of origin, rather than the country of processing, of every product.

Can I take it that this practice is about to end, and that we can have clear and accurate labelling so that we will know exactly which country every product comes from?

**Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, clarity, clarity, clarity: this is what the market is calling for today, demanding rules that guarantee transparency so as to protect consumers. Freedom of the market is also defined by clear rules that, when applied through transparent mechanisms, put consumers as a whole in a position to choose. This is what we are here today to ask for; this is what we are here to demand.

Frequently on Italian state-run television channels, investigative documentaries are broadcast showing how, in some countries far removed – including culturally – from Europe, the production techniques are based on the use of highly polluting goods, of polluting techniques, of toxic solvents, with the workforce, including children, being exploited and made to work ridiculous hours. Consumers must be put in a position where they can also choose, having a clear idea of where particular products come from. This is what we are asking for. I believe that the time has come to adopt, clearly and immediately, rules that will put consumers in a position to choose through absolutely clear and transparent mechanisms, and to adopt them with a great deal of determination and much more quickly than has been the case so far.

**Catherine Ashton, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to what is an important debate on this issue.

If I might begin with Ms Muscardini's particular points – the feeling that this has dragged on for some time. In my time as a Commissioner, I have been very conscious of talking with Member States about the issues that they are most concerned with and have tried to react when I could see an issue of importance. But, as other Members have said, the reality of political life is that I have to get any proposal through the Council. That means – when it is clear that there is not a solid majority for a particular idea – thinking again about what it is that might make the difference between failing to get something through, where clearly there is a very strong set of views, and success.

It seemed to me that we had the opportunity, by refining what we were describing in order to address the concerns that Member States had, to promote this yet again, because it still rests within the Commission. Especially when a Commission is coming to the end of its life and is now, of course, beyond – some might say – the end of its life, it is important to reflect back on what has not yet been completed.

I cannot give time guarantees; I would like to, but I am in the hands of the Council inevitably on that. But I do make my commitment to carry on with this, because there is a strength of feeling. I will come on to what I think and why I think that is so important.

A number of honourable Members have raised the particular issues about consumers and the opportunity that this would afford for transparency and clarity – to give information to consumers. I think even Adam Smith was quoted in that. It is important that, if you are going to have free trade in the world, you also have to have clarity and transparency for consumers to make the kinds of choices that go alongside free trade. Those concepts go hand in hand, and I would agree with that. Therefore, I think that those honourable Members who raised that point actually get to the heart of what this is trying to do.

It is not about protectionism. This happens all over the world. For most of the countries from which one would buy the kind of products we have listed, you already know where you buy from. As a consumer myself, it matters to me to know where the product is made. I think for many consumers this has been an important part of the way in which they interact with the market. The opportunity to say that we will make sure that we have that transparency, I would argue, is very important. We should not be frightened of it, because, if we are frightened of it, there is something wrong. The point about openness and free trade and transparency is that you face that and actually deal with it appropriately.

Specifically, Mr Schlyter asked me about the expanding of the list. Well, it is subject to further discussion: there is not a final list at all. We have simply tried to put forward what we believe is a realistic list but are very comfortable in actually discussing that further.

I think that it is only right that I also address the concerns that have been raised about whether we are being ambitious enough. Mr Arif said that we should not water this down. Of course – but I am not trying to water down; I am trying to be realistic. If, in the end, I have a proposal that I simply do not have the capacity to put through the Council, I think it is beholden on me to look again and ask whether there are there things we could do, not to water down but to recognise the legitimate concerns and see whether we can put this through, perhaps in a pilot model or a more narrow model in order to test that what I say is true and in order that we can then hopefully broaden out later, because we have actually got an understanding of what it is we are trying to do.

We are looking at the whole Euromed issues as well. That is part of the discussion, as you know, that is currently going on. I also take the point about what we are trying to do in terms of protection of jobs. Honourable Members will know that I have made much about the difference between protectionism and support for industry, support for jobs and consumers and so on. We have got to be clear that trade is not about ignoring all of those things. They go hand in hand.

Mr Fjellner, I have got to deal with your particular point, because you described what I was doing as an improper way of acting. I am not quite sure how parliamentary it is in the European Parliament to describe somebody as behaving improperly, but let me assure that I am not seeking in any way to do that. It is not about any link to anything. What I tried to do while I was talking to Member States about all of these aspects of trade was to pick up, either by the work I had been doing – and specifically, talking to small businesses across Europe, where I have a great concern that they should have real opportunities so that more than 3% of them will start trading beyond the European Union – issues that are either left over – things that we have not resolved one way or the other – or indeed where countries feel particularly strongly.

This is not the only issue, by any means, but it did occur to me that this is an opportunity to try and bring this back. It is about the level playing field. It is about clarity and transparency for consumers. It is about saying that we need to move forward. I hope Parliament will engage with this and help refine this further so that we actually have something extremely positive to take back.

Very finally, I was asked specifically about the question of ‘made in the European Union’. We did consult industry and consumers on that. It did not find favour. There was a concern that that would be expensive. It was not what was being looked for and so we have not pursued that.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the next part-session.

#### **Written statements (Rule 149)**

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (PT) One of the consequences of the liberalisation of world trade is heavy job losses and a worsening of the social situation in a number of regions and countries, including Portugal, which are more dependent on certain productive sectors, such as the textile and clothing sector, for example. In the current climate of severe economic and social crisis, this situation requires a different approach. Adopting rules on designation of origin could help raise the profile of production in various Member States. However, much more is required. We need to protect productive sectors by means of a package of broader and more effective measures, including: implementation of protection and safeguard mechanisms against aggressive exports, prioritising local production; abandoning the model based on low pay, low qualifications and job insecurity; putting public instruments in place to control production and regulate markets, so as to uphold the principle of food sovereignty and security; effectively tackling company relocations. Defending each country’s right to sustainable production is a future requirement. We need to do this in the name of a new economic, social, energy and environmental rationality, which the neoliberal model not only does not guarantee but, in fact, makes impossible.

#### **24. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes**

#### **25. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes**

#### **26. Closure of the sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 00.15)*