

THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MRS MORGANTINI

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 9 a.m.)

2. Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

3. Reduced rates of value added tax (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A6-0047/2009) by Mrs van den Burg on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, on the proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC as regards reduced rates of value added tax (COM(2008)0428 – C6-0299/2008 – 2008/0143(CNS)).

Ieke van den Burg, rapporteur. – (NL) This report on reduced VAT rates has been on quite a journey. In actual fact, there is no report left, because the two other big groups, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, failed to show up to the vote on my report in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and, without any warning, voted against beforehand because they did not like the rejection or adoption of one amendment or another.

By doing so, they have put the support for this important Commission proposal at serious risk. I regret this deeply because it has created completely the wrong impression about the European Parliament's position. Fortunately, they have backtracked and have now indicated that the Commission's proposal can count on their full support. We agreed that we would no longer bicker about these amendments during the plenary, but would instead accept Commissioner Kovács' proposal with a resounding 'yes'.

Unfortunately, Mrs Lulling nevertheless laboured under the misapprehension that she had to retable her rejected amendments, even though this is not really consistent with the text of the legislative resolution or the procedure we are following. There is apparently here in this Parliament a variation on the Latin saying *Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*, what is legitimate for Mrs Lulling, is not legitimate for an ordinary MEP. Without taking anything away from her divine status, I would urge you not to be distracted by this and to vote emphatically in favour of the legislative resolution during the roll-call vote at the end. This is what this is all about, after all. Together with the Commissioner, I count on your support and I assume that Mrs Lulling will realise that if she withholds her support from this resolution because things have not gone her way, she will be much worse off and will create the wrong impression that she is opposed to a reduced VAT rate.

This Parliament, and I am very proud of this, has a long tradition of supporting proposals for applying a reduced VAT rate for labour-intensive services. What is more, this Parliament has taken it upon itself, on the initiative of one of my predecessors, Mr van Velzen, during the employment summit in Luxembourg in 1997, to launch the proposal to use this low VAT rate as an incentive for employment by making these services cheaper, increasing the volume, and also by bridging the gap between illegal and legal working. This employment target is, to my mind, very important again at this point in time. It is my firm belief that the experiment has proven its effect beyond any doubt.

The previous Commissioner, Mr Bolkestein, was less convinced and was, like a number of Member States, sceptical. He did not want to use employment as a target for tax policy. He took the view that tax policy was not intended for this purpose. Fortunately, the present Commissioner realises that this should be seen in a wider context, and I am delighted that he is now giving this experiment a structural dimension.

I would like to add a brief comment about the current situation. In all honesty, I cannot imagine the Council, in the current situation, not giving its unanimous support to this proposal. After all, it is keen to do something about this tragic job situation and the recovery of the European economy. Tax measures, including a reduction in VAT, for example, in the building and renovation industry, in making homes and our cultural heritage

more energy-efficient, and all kinds of other things, could give an incentive to the housing market, which is now very much at a stalemate.

At the risk of labouring the obvious, it is not the amendment tabled by the PPE-DE Group within the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection that puts the stress on energy efficiency. This was already in the Commission proposal. It was deleted in Amendment 6 and re-introduced in Amendment 7. This can only create confusion. It is, however, clear that Parliament is very much in favour of energy efficiency. We therefore hope that the Council will embrace the proposal by Commissioner Kovács and that this important vote today does not degenerate into internal squabbling.

László Kovács, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, I want to thank the European Parliament for its quick handling of this proposal, in the light of the request by the European Council of last December in the context of the European Economic Recovery Plan to settle the issue of reduced VAT rates in certain sectors by March 2009.

I am pleased that the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) has adopted a draft resolution approving the Commission's initiative, and I hope that the plenary will take the same supportive line.

I would like to thank the ECON Committee and the rapporteur, Ms van den Burg, for their support. Indeed, the quick adoption of this proposal is necessary in order to give certainty about the application of reduced rates to certain locally supplied, labour-intensive services that would otherwise have to disappear at the end of 2010. Moreover, it is important to ensure equal possibilities for all Member States in sectors such as housing and restaurants, because in these sectors Member States are currently not on an equal footing.

The current economic and financial crisis adds to the urgency of adopting and implementing this proposal. It is not the moment to destroy jobs, which would be the case if the reduced rates currently applied in 18 Member States for labour-intensive services were not made definitive. Moreover, it is important to make these reduced rates rapidly available to all Member States. By incentivising consumer spending in areas such as the housing sector, reduced rates can have positive effects on employment, in particular amongst the category of low-skilled workers, who are precisely those who risk being laid off first in the current crisis. In this context, I have already recommended to the Council to modify the proposed date of entry into force of the directive, in order to allow its application as quickly as possible after a positive decision is taken by the Council.

In the Council, the Czech Presidency is currently concentrating all its efforts on achieving a compromise concentrating on a limited number of sectors – labour-intensive, locally supplied services – to which reduced rates should be made available, as required by the European Council.

However, I have some comments on the amendments that have been tabled to this specific and limited proposal.

On Amendment 3: on the exclusion of alcoholic beverages from the restaurant services, the Commission respected the coherence of Community policies, in particular the need for coherence between VAT and excise duties, but also considering the global health policy of the EU. Contrary to some concerns, differentiating between food and non-alcoholic beverages, on the one hand, and alcoholic beverages, on the other hand, does not create a serious administrative burden for businesses. Indeed, currently, seven out of the 11 Member States applying reduced rates to restaurant services exclude alcoholic beverages without any difficulty.

On Amendment 2: as for the proposed extension of the scope of reduced VAT rates to machinery used by farmers, I consider this to be unnecessary. This is because the VAT charged on equipment serving as input for the agricultural sector is not a cost to farmers because they have the right to deduct this VAT, like any other taxable person.

On Amendments 1 and 4: concerning the amendments related to the addition of children's clothes and footwear, I would like to remind you that the proposal under consideration is a restricted one dealing principally with locally supplied, labour-intensive services. Therefore, further extensions of the scope of the proposal should not be considered in this context. Furthermore, bearing in mind the attitude and concrete positions of some Member States, this extension would surely jeopardise the unanimous support, which we very much need, in the Council.

On Amendment 5: the amendment relating to the addition of monuments and gravestones is not necessary, as a reduced rate for these supplies is already allowed by the current provisions when provided by funeral

undertakings. Moreover, renovation, repair, maintenance of cultural heritage and historical monuments is also covered by the current Commission proposal which is under consideration.

On Amendment 7: I can assure you that the Commission is very keen to specifically address the question of the use of reduced rates in order to promote energy efficiency. This will be done in the framework of the 'Green Tax Package' currently under preparation and will be coming to the Council and Parliament in April.

In conclusion, I want to declare that the proposal would support housing, support the SMEs and save jobs, which is fully in line with the European Economic Recovery Plan. It is not an obligation but an option: Member States can decide whether or not to apply it, so it even extends their tax sovereignty.

Olle Schmidt, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection*. – (SV) This report demonstrates that taxation is a sensitive issue, and I respect that. At the same time, however, I think that we could have handled the matter better in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, which was responsible for the report. We are now tabling the text for a resolution, which is a good thing.

It is, of course, extremely important that the internal market is not disrupted by unreasonable and unfair competition. There are grounds for reiterating this at a time when State aid seems to be flowing in abundance.

However, the EU needs a more sensible view of how reduced VAT rates can be used to promote jobs and growth, particularly on the local market and for labour-intensive services. This is what the Commission's proposal is all about. In other words, it is about more jobs, but it is also about tackling the black economy. Thus, we need reduced VAT on the likes of restaurant services, care services for young people, the sick, the disabled and the elderly, hairdressing services and new goods such as audio books, which are very important in my own country, CDs, child car seats and babies' nappies, as well as domestic services such as renovation and repair work and cleaning.

In the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, we fully supported the Commission's line and added Amendments 6 and 7 under Mr Harbour's name. As an aside, I would like to say that it is not easy to understand how these texts and the voting procedure are handled in this Parliament. In the first of these amendments, we emphasise the importance of reducing the 'black' or 'grey' economy. In our other amendment, we aim to make it possible to lower the VAT rate on renovation and repair work in order to save energy. During these difficult economic times, different means need to be used to boost the economy and a reduced tax may be an important method of achieving this.

Finally, Mrs Lulling's promotion of alcohol comes up once again. As usual, I will politely, but firmly, reject her call.

Astrid Lulling, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, today's discussion – and the previous speakers have confirmed this – is taking place in very unusual circumstances, since we do not have a report for the plenary as would normally be the case. I want to make things quite clear: it was an ill-assorted majority that voted against the report in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

My group voted against this report, although we fully support the principle of extending the application of a reduced rate of VAT even beyond what the European Commission is proposing. That is because all of our amendments have been rejected by the socialists and the liberals.

We had made a great effort to compromise. We accepted all the socialist rapporteur's proposals. She did not think it was worth making the slightest effort to accept any of our proposals. The regrettable, but at the same time inevitable, result of the vote should not, therefore, be surprising, Mrs van den Burg.

I would like to offer you some friendly advice to change your attitude in future because as the Romans used to say, *errare humanum est, perseverare diabolicum* ['to err is human, but to persist is diabolical].

Let us, however, come back to the matter in hand. For the plenary my group decided to retable some amendments that came from the Members of the committee that is knowledgeable on the subject. These amendments are important, and it has been said very clearly, Mrs van den Burg, that no one can prevent a Member from proposing amendments to a document or to a resolution.

The most important of our amendments concerns applying reduced rates to alcoholic beverages in restaurants. It is not, Mr Schmidt, a way of encouraging alcoholism. That is ridiculous. If the Commission's proposal were accepted, restaurant owners would have to apply two different rates of VAT. It is complicated and it is not justified. Long live red tape. Believe me, if you do not vote for Amendment 3, I know how to inform the

whole of Europe's catering sector – and it is large – that your position has prevented the application of a reduced VAT rate on all its services.

I proposed that food and all drink should be taxed at the same reduced rate, if it is applied. To me this is just common sense and I think that we could all support this proposal. Why complicate matters? Why look for public health issues where there is no reason for there to be any?

Madam President, my group supports the extension of reduced VAT rates and we urge our governments to take this issue forward. Our fellow citizens already had high expectations in this matter at this time of economic crisis and the daily catalogue of bad news. This measure supporting the food industry is becoming increasingly necessary, Madam President. We want Europe to be recognised for its flexibility; that would indeed be a positive sign.

Pervenche Berès, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, as you know, the European Parliament recognises that your job is difficult. It is not easy here, but when you are in the Council, it is worse, because there you have to work with unanimity. I hope, therefore, that everyone here will behave responsibly and vote in a coherent way. If we think that the Commission's proposal is good, then we must support it.

Quibbling in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs led to certain amendments being singled out. The socialists, behaving responsibly, once again, decided not to table any amendments at all in plenary, because in these matters, if we want to move forward all we in the European Parliament have to do is to give our overwhelming support, as far as possible, to the Commission's proposal, if we consider it a good one, as is the case here.

We have had many debates about VAT, about subsidiarity and about the need for tax harmonisation. VAT is the classic example of us all being on common ground. Let us make use of it. Renewing, on a temporary basis, this experiment with a reduced rate of VAT, when it aims at and contributes towards strengthening labour-intensive services – not necessarily the case for alcoholic drinks in restaurants – has shown us that this system works, so let us build on it. Let us put an end to legal uncertainty and harmonise the basis on which Member States can intervene. We will then have consistent goals, tax harmonisation where possible and encouragement for labour-intensive services. Who could say no to that today? Who could say no to using tax reductions as an incentive to consistently improving energy efficiency in our housing stock?

Today, taking into account what happened in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, taking into account the debate that I see taking place in the Council, I believe that we must support the Commission's proposal very strongly – and I hope with the largest possible majority. At this stage of the debate, trying to do better could turn out worse and I think that our fellow citizens would not understand our remaining in a state of legal uncertainty.

We need to consolidate this system that has been shown to work. That is what our rapporteur, Mrs van den Burg, is proposing, and that, I hope, is what Parliament will vote for overwhelmingly later on. In this way, the Commissioner can take this strong message to the Council and obtain a final decision which will make it possible to consolidate this system.

Alain Lipietz, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, since this is one of the last chances we will have for doing so, I should like, first of all, to thank Mr Kovács for the efforts, often disappointing, that he has made over a number of years here, in a situation where taxation is subject to the rule of unanimity, and thus subject to veto by the various Member States. His task has been very difficult and he may feel not much has been achieved. I hope with all my heart that his crowning achievement, this directive, will go through with solid support from Parliament.

The proof of the excellence of his work is that, when we wanted to improve on it in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, we were unable to do so. Some people were pulling in one direction, others in another. Each side was convinced we could do better. We managed to put through some of the better amendments, or so we thought, and then when we voted on the whole text, we realised that it was not going to work.

In the end, the group's coordinators reached the consensus that Mr Kovács had probably struck the right balance. Therefore, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, like the other two groups that have just spoken, will not be tabling any amendments. You have struck the right balance and it is an intelligent one.

Some countries, today, faced with the crisis, are reducing all their VAT rates. I am convinced that this is a mistake. Member States need financial resources and this is not the time to go deeper into deficit in that way, even if you are doing so to stimulate the economy by encouraging spending. Another reason is that trying to reduce prices by playing around with VAT leads to very high real rates at a time when the Central Bank is trying to lower them.

You are proposing another strategy and you are right: using VAT to make targeted reductions or targeted changes in relative prices. These are the right choices, according to two criteria.

Firstly, subsidiarity. In other words, you are targeting immobile products: local services and construction. Your second criterion for targeting is labour-intensive services. As environmentalists, we would have liked you to target the green revolution specifically: the sectors that are necessary if we are to emerge from the current crisis, which is the result of the industrial, liberal and productivist model that has dominated the world for more than 30 years.

We would have liked you to extend the reduced VAT rates to all goods covered by the Kyoto Protocol. In practical terms, if we combine locally supplied with labour-intensive services, then this would mean that all the construction, all the insulation, and all the development of energy efficient buildings could be covered in the directive, and that is good enough for us.

I should like to say straightaway that we shall obviously not be voting in favour of Mrs Lulling's argument. Of course, it is diabolical to persist in error, but I think this saying could equally apply to Mrs Lulling herself. We could also talk about Mandeville and private vice for public virtue. We shall not encourage private vice through public vice and we will defend those countries that try to limit alcohol consumption.

Helmuth Markov, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL-NGL Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner Kovács, ladies and gentlemen, and especially Mrs van den Burg, it is regrettable that here in Parliament we are only able to agree on the Commission's proposal and not on the actual report produced by Mrs van den Burg. We would have gladly given our support to this report in its original version and we congratulate the rapporteur. However, it has been rejected by the majority in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. The decisive factor was the 'no' vote from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. After the defeat in the individual voting, the committee was not then prepared to adopt any report at all, and this we very much regret.

When it comes down to it, we have a lot to gain from the Commission's proposal for a directive. We particularly welcome the fact that the Commission gives a positive assessment of the results of the Copenhagen study that was commissioned by the Commission itself. The study proposes the retention, and even the extension, of reduced VAT rates on services and other activities. This will secure jobs, particularly in small- and micro-sized enterprises, and bring whole sectors out of the underground economy and transform them into a regulated economic activity. In the present crisis, this stabilisation is very important. It will secure, and hopefully create, jobs.

Of course, we on the Left welcome the reduction in VAT rates as a matter of principle. It is well known that, being an indirect tax, VAT hits those dependent on their wages and low earners particularly hard. High and very high earners must bear a greater tax burden. In recent years, these high earners have had their burden reduced in an irresponsible manner in all European countries.

The Commission's proposal is intended to be a regulation of unlimited duration. This, too, is welcome. This will avoid the less than ideal situation of us having to extend the reduced tax rates every couple of years. It will create legal certainty for the service providers. As a German Member, I am particularly pleased that the German Federal Government has finally ceased its blocking of a permanent regulation. This is something positive for a change from the grand coalition in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Of the amendments tabled, we support those that are in favour of extending the reduced VAT rates. As regards the supply of alcoholic beverages, however, the existing regulations should remain in place. As we know, higher VAT rates in this area will primarily serve to protect public health. Member States should, therefore, be given a free hand in this regard, too. Thank you very much.

John Whittaker, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group*. – Madam President, it is hard to believe that we are sitting here today discussing minor changes to the rules on value added tax when EU countries are facing the worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression. We continue to pretend that EU economies are

not as badly contaminated by bad debt and slump as elsewhere, yet even in Germany output is falling at the staggering annualised rate of 8% and government finances everywhere are stretched to the limit as tax revenue falls and welfare spending rises, and as governments take over private debts and try vainly to stimulate growth.

The worst case is probably Greece with its downgraded government debt still 94% of GDP and with an interest risk margin that is today creeping back to 3%. Greece is going to need bailing out – but by whom? Not by the Germans, they say. Even ardent supporters of the great EU project are now having to accept that if Greek debt is not underwritten, Greece may be forced out of the euro zone. Probably of even more serious concern is the huge exposure of several euro zone countries to defaulting debts of Eastern Europe.

I almost feel sorry for the Commission. For years it has been trying to do as it was told, upholding the rules on state aid, competition and procurement: rules which are essential components of the project but are now being ignored all round. The saddest spectacle is Commissioner Almunia's statement this week that he intends to invoke an excessive deficit procedure against Spain, France and Ireland because they have broken the budget rules of the Stability Pact. Mr Almunia – please – the Stability Pact is broken. It never did have any teeth. Never mind that prudent government finances are essential to the survival of the euro, there is nothing else that these countries can do about their budgets.

No doubt the gestures towards European Union will continue, but democratically-elected governments have a primary interest in looking after the populations that elected them. France and Germany have made it clear that their fiscal stimuli are there to help their own industries and workers. Obviously coordination is only for the good times.

Economies are in dire straits all over the world. Some of them will pull through. If some European Union economies return to prosperity, it will not be thanks to the European Union or to its rules on VAT.

Jim Allister (NI). – Madam President, I do not hold with the notion that our economic salvation lies in tiny value added tax cuts, which are something we have had in the United Kingdom with, frankly, only a marginal positive impact. However, I do accept that reducing the taxation burden is an instrument of economic stimulation. Thus, this proposal – very modest as it is – whereby cuts in VAT would be possible in some sectors, is welcome so far as it goes.

I would have much preferred it to have gone further, beyond the realms of tokenism. Extending it to embrace house renovations and repairs would be its greatest asset, because stimulation of the hard-pressed construction sector is very much required, and, to achieve optimum effect, that concession should not be restricted to energy efficiency measures only. Construction needs help right across the board, not just on a selective basis.

Making it possible for Member States to act in making these marginal cuts in VAT would only be half the battle because in many cases – my own country included – hard-pressed Chancellors of the Exchequer with diminishing revenue resources will perhaps be hesitant and will have to be persuaded to act. Even I would have to concede, though, that on VAT issues such as those covered by this report, they would at least not have the excuse of blaming Brussels if they failed to follow through on what is permitted under these proposals.

John Purvis (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I wish to join the Chair of our committee in sympathising with Commissioner Kovács over the difficult situation he faces in trying to get tax issues through the machinery of the Community. He has to use maximum political tact in order to achieve unanimity.

While I wholly support the subsidiarity principle and the sovereign right of Member States to set their own tax rates, I would suggest to Member States which have not as yet taken advantage of the facility for lower tax rates on labour-intensive, localised industries, to seriously consider doing so.

In the country I know best, where we have waltzed into a 2.5% reduction in VAT across the board – with, as Mr Allister says, little or no obvious response or result economically – I would suggest that it would have been much more effective to have concentrated action in the particular areas of labour-intensive, localised industries and to have reduced the rate substantially from 17.5% down to the lower rate of 5%, or below. That would have been much more effective in getting people into work, and activity going again.

Areas such as house renovations and extensions, energy-saving improvements, and perhaps gardening and landscaping work and, as Olle Schmidt said, care for the elderly and care for children, are the ones which would get people into work and probably increase the tax-take, because those people would be paying tax on their incomes as well.

It is a win-win situation to concentrate in those areas, and I urge all those Member States which have not yet taken advantage of this, including and especially my own country, to do so.

Joel Hasse Ferreira (PSE). – (PT) The interest in adopting this proposal for a directive essentially lies in how it can help to invigorate local economies and support social action. The application of a reduced rate of VAT will be very important in the housing sector, both in construction and in renovation, as it will allow Member States which adopt it to reduce the cost to the end user.

The provision of local services, particularly by small enterprises, may also benefit from this reduction in the VAT rate, thus securing and generating more and better jobs by encouraging the consumption of goods and services, and thus stimulating the economy itself.

Restaurant services, which are fundamental to the smooth functioning of local economies, and increased tourism may in this way gain a great deal at the local level from this reduction in the VAT rate. These services, ladies and gentlemen, should not circulate within the European internal market, which will help to reduce the reservations of certain Member States, already expressed within the Council. As a result, I cannot agree with extending this reduced rate to equipment, whatever the pretext.

The prudent way in which this proposal must be dealt with in the European Parliament should not give governments which have reservations about the European Commission's proposal any pretext to use, in practice, the right of veto afforded to them on tax matters by European legislation. As a result, Parliament must prudently reject any amendments without any real purpose which will only hinder the adoption of the text. As has already been said in this House, not only is the very best the enemy of the good, but the person who wants it all may lose it all.

This proposal for a directive is important not only for strengthening local economies, but also to meet the repeatedly expressed ambitions of various Member States. Let us therefore support the Commission's proposal, as presented. This was in fact the outcome of the vote, with my agreement, in the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

I welcome the work of the rapporteurs and call for the adoption of this proposal in the exact terms in which it came from the Commission and in which it was adopted in the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

Danutė Budreikaitė (ALDE). – (LT) The regulation of VAT reductions has long been an area demanding a systemic approach. If a VAT reduction is permitted, all countries should have the right to benefit from it, not just those which won that right, but this is an issue for the future. Right now we need to make urgent decisions in order to overcome the economic crisis. The Commission's proposal covers labour-intensive services and locally-based services for private end consumers, including restaurant services, which would not impede the proper functioning of the internal market. However, there are doubts as to whether the restaurant services mentioned are just of local significance, or whether they would encourage different conditions of competition in border regions and have an impact on tourism. My country Lithuania, battling with the economic crisis, abolished VAT reductions. The government based this decision on the National Audit Office's assessment that manufacturers benefit most from a reduction in VAT, but who benefits from an increase in VAT? Price growth, which is disproportionate to an increase in VAT, clearly shows who benefits. This same idea was mentioned in the European Parliament when debating the reduction of excise duty on fuel. Representatives of the European Commission maintained that this will not reduce oil prices. I am pleased that the Commission's proposal being debated is using a different evaluation of Copenhagen economics. Perhaps the Commission could explain to everyone the concept of VAT, its influence on business and the consumer and indicate what measures exist, and moreover, whether they exist at all, to protect the consumer from the producer, as such cases are characteristic of many countries. I agree that VAT reductions must be applied with the economic and social considerations that every citizen should be able to acquire the goods and services they need most and with the aim of strengthening and supporting locally-based services.

Dariusz Maciej Grabowski (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, the EU is confronting the most serious economic challenge in its history. Firstly, the crisis demands a thorough analysis of the errors inherent in the economic strategy that has been applied to date. Secondly, we need recommendations for effective solutions for the future. In this regard, the efficiency and effectiveness of the tax and VAT system should be analysed. There is no doubt, however, that the tax system and the VAT rate should be drawn up in accordance with the principles of the freedom, independence and sovereignty of the Member States. Our answer to a unified tax system is a resounding 'No'.

The newly admitted Member States, which are often less developed and have a specific demographic structure, with large numbers of young people, require completely different tax policies to the old EU Member States. Wherever possible, therefore, the VAT rate in the newly accepted countries should be as low as possible. Meanwhile, as I myself have put forward, we need to pursue a reduction in VAT across the EU as a whole in the case of cultural goods, such as CDs. On the other hand, we also need to propose a tax on financial operations and speculation. What is happening today, as regards the capital transferred from the newly admitted Member States, is impossible to control and contradicts the fundamental ideological precepts of the EU.

Luca Romagnoli (NI). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I support the rapporteur, Mrs van den Burg, and the whole Parliament if it adopts this proposal aimed at amending the provisions of the VAT directive.

At last we have a proposal that will guarantee equal opportunities for all Member States and improve the working of the internal market as regards reduced VAT rates. The proposal also intelligently respects subsidiarity; it allows States to apply reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive and locally-supplied services, as well as those of social importance such as the construction of housing, personal assistance, and so on, and to small- and medium-sized enterprises in general.

I therefore share the rapporteur's hope that this instrument sets out a fiscal system that will promote employment, increase productivity and reduce the underground economy.

Paolo Bartolozzi (PPE-DE). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the European Parliament has always taken a close interest in changes to VAT, whether for the purpose of harmonising rates among Member States, adjusting VAT to the economic climate, or taking account of temporary exemptions granted to new members of the European Union. Although we have taken an overall view, our approach has until now necessarily been characterised by a need for flexibility in applying reduced rates, either to take account of the specific nature of manufacturing sectors, or for economic and social reasons.

The proposal in question is, however, aimed at extending the application of reduced VAT rates to a variety of services, including labour-intensive services, restaurants, locally-supplied services, construction and transfer of housing, and services provided for the disadvantaged.

Far from seeking to harmonise VAT in all Member States, the directive in question, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, intends to ensure equal opportunities for all Member States, while allowing them to set their own reduced rates. As a consequence, consumers will be led to transfer certain activities carried out within the local or underground economy to the formal economy, thereby encouraging economic growth without distorting the operation of the internal market. It should, however, be remembered that the majority of the services in question can already benefit from a reduced rate, if only in a limited number of Member States and for a limited period.

The debate remains open, though, on the application of reduced rates for environmental protection and energy saving, on which the Commission is to provide specific assessments, given the importance of these sectors to the EU economy.

Dariusz Rosati (PSE). – (PL) Madam President, in adding my voice to the debate on the Commission's proposal for reduced VAT rates, I would like to draw your attention to the implications of this proposal in terms of combating the impact of the current crisis. The Member States currently need effective instruments in order to protect jobs and prevent a recession. Reducing the VAT rate for labour-intensive services meets this objective. It lessens the burden placed upon SMEs, facilitates access to basic services and protects jobs. At the same time, it neither distorts competition on the internal market, as it supports businesses providing local services, nor does it pose a threat to state revenue, since the introduction of lower rates remains a voluntary step. This Parliament should support the Commission's proposal and I wish Commissioner Kovács every success in convincing the entire Council to adopt it.

Mariela Velichkova Baeva (ALDE). – (BG) The European Commission's proposal to permanently reduce VAT rates for locally provided services, including labour-intensive services is timely and aims to achieve rationalisation and simplification through necessary changes, fine-tuning, and creating the potential for the growth in jobs in sectors with low-skilled workforces while restricting activities in the grey economy, retaining jobs and ensuring equal treatment of the Member States including their economic operators.

One of the main arguments for reducing VAT is that it will provide more favourable distribution of income after consumption, by reducing the cost of the shopping basket of low-income households and increasing that of high-income households. The changes in the consumer structure also involve changes in the gross domestic product and productivity in the official sector, and the reduction of activity in the grey economy, such as services in the housing sector and other local services which are the subject of the present proposal by the European Commission. Of course, the potential net economic benefit of reducing VAT rates depends not just on the characteristics of the relevant sector, but also of the specific economic environment in the relevant Member States. For example, increasing the scope for reduced VAT rates in sectors with unskilled workforces presupposes an inflexible labour market, while in the food sector it presupposes significant differences in consumption between high and low-income households.

We should also bear in mind implementing VAT reductions will also reduce treasury revenue. As a proportion of the gross domestic product, this ranges from half to one-and-a-half percent of the GDP of the different Member States. Stable public finances during the current period of economic upheaval will allow the relevant governments to deal with the structural deficits in the current period. Even governments which do have room to manoeuvre will make use of options such as cutting VAT rates for labour-intensive services in order to achieve other aims of their economic policies. In view of the above facts and arguments, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe will support the Commission's proposal to ensure there is sound support in the European Parliament for this important stage of the decision-making process.

Roberta Angelilli (UEN). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the proposal to extend the application of reduced VAT to certain labour-intensive services, restaurants and the maintenance and construction of buildings represents a great opportunity to have a positive economic impact on the market and employment in the context of the current severe economic crisis. Competition will not be affected, rather this will be a chance to give a slight boost to production and to stimulate consumption, create new jobs and support businesses and families.

In my opinion, it would be beneficial to extend the scope of reduced VAT rates still further, for example to cover 'green services' in order to encourage environmental policies. As far as the text we are to vote on is concerned, I particularly welcome the proposal to cut VAT on babies' nappies and children's services. This Parliament has asked the Commission and the Member States on several occasions to improve coordination between macroeconomic and social policies in order to redress the rise in new forms of poverty. Indeed, we must not forget that approximately 17% of European families are now living below the poverty line and one child in five is poor.

So we await the Council's response – I hope that it will be able to adopt this proposal as soon as possible and open a wider and more ambitious debate on promoting fiscal policies for families as well as businesses, and perhaps come to extend reduced VAT to all children's goods.

Valdis Dombrovskis (PPE-DE). – (LV) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, within the context of Europe's Economic Recovery Plan, it is being recommended that the Member States should make a temporary reduction in VAT in order to stimulate consumption. In addition, the European Commission has prepared a proposal to extend Member States' options for applying a reduced VAT rate. Wider application of a reduced VAT rate will not only foster economic recovery, but will also contribute to the creation of new jobs and reduce the black economy. The amendments to the directive provide for a significant extension of the opportunities for applying reduced VAT rates. This will apply to catering services, renovation and repair work for housing and places of worship, labour-intensive and locally-supplied services, children's car seats, children's nappies and so on. From the economic and environmental policy viewpoint, it is also important to apply a reduced VAT rate to energy-saving materials and services connected with energy saving and energy efficiency. I call upon the European Commission to speed up the consideration of this issue and to prepare proposals on these points as swiftly as possible. These are welcome changes and demonstrate the European Union's readiness to react quickly to the economic crisis to the limits of its capabilities. I hope that the Council will also support these changes. It just remains to urge the Member States to use these new possibilities in the application of reduced VAT rates. Thank you for your attention.

Antolín Sánchez Presedo (PSE). – (ES) Madam President, I am in favour of allowing Member States to apply harmonised reduced VAT rates on a permanent basis for certain services of social interest and labour-intensive, locally supplied services.

Measures of this kind are noted for providing citizens with greater purchasing power, improving the environment for SMEs and increasing their productivity, and strengthening the formal economy. At this time of recession this can stimulate recovery, growth and jobs.

It will be beneficial to extend the reduced rates to babies' nappies and equipment for people with disabilities, electronic books, environmental sewerage and recycling works, as well as all housing, places of worship and cultural and artistic heritage, restaurants, gardening and personal care services. For this reason, while awaiting the next energy efficiency package, I support Mrs van den Burg's report and trust that next month political agreement will be reached that will enable it to be implemented as soon as possible.

Margaritis Schinas (PPE-DE). – (EL) Madam President, allow me to start, before I address the topic of the debate, to comment on the indescribable and painful attack by the euro-sceptics behind me on the euro zone and the Greek economy; I refer merely to the statements by Mr Almunia and Mr Trichet, who have assured the House that there is no risk of cohesion in the euro zone, that our collective defences are not working and, as far as the Greek economy is concerned, may I inform Mr Whittaker that he needs to get used to the idea that we are still one of the few countries with positive growth and low unemployment, even in these very difficult times. The euro-sceptics are anti-Brussels, anti-Frankfurt, now they are starting to be anti-everything.

Now back to report we are discussing today. I wish to say that we need to look at this issue from two perspectives: from the perspective of when the whole story started, when we were not yet in a time of crisis, and from the perspective of the situation we are in now, with the biggest economic crisis striking deep into the real economy of Europe.

During the first stage, before the crisis, the idea was to focus on the few labour-intensive sectors, such as catering, because we had an impact here, mainly on high prices and the cost of living. Now, however, with the crisis affecting many – if not all – countries, there is also the idea that Parliament, as the mouthpiece of the political views of society, should also make an effort to look at issues which were not covered at the time, at the beginning, such as the issue of agricultural machinery, which my group has the facility to propose in Amendment 2.

As far now as these contradictions which we see on the left wing of Parliament are concerned, where certain issues, such as the energy aspects of buildings, are a good idea, but others, such as agriculture or alcohol, are a bad idea, I think that the best judge is the citizen, not the politicians.

Proinsias De Rossa (PSE). – Madam President, the European Parliament's priority today has to be to get the largest majority possible for the Commission proposal to extend and make permanent the option to lower VAT rates on labour-intensive services. This is not an issue for political grandstanding or, indeed, promoting pet projects. Thousands of low-skilled jobs are being lost every day in every Member State. Low VAT rates have been shown to encourage employment in services, assist SMEs, and, indeed, make the informal economy less attractive.

Our responsibility here today is to deliver a strong message to our Member State governments to get on with it. The construction sector badly needs a boost – renovations, repairs, and installations will help achieve energy efficiency, as well as helping employment. Restaurants, childcare and care of the elderly would also benefit.

I support the rapporteur's approach and I hope that my own government, the Irish Government, will opt into this proposal, which unfortunately it has not done to date.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). – (RO) Last year, the Commission proposed an economic recovery plan which is proving to be very difficult to implement. Member States and their governments must be proactive, especially during this crisis.

Member States can apply reduced VAT rates to the provision of natural gas and electricity, heating or cooling systems, to children's clothing and footwear, to books, newspapers and magazines, pharmaceutical products and medical equipment for the disabled, as well as to restaurant services. It only requires vision and political will.

The building sector has the largest number of jobs. I strongly support the need to allow Member States to apply reduced VAT rates to renovation and repair works aimed at boosting energy saving and energy efficiency.

As rapporteur for the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, I even proposed reduced VAT rates for products in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sector as well. I support the rapporteur's proposal and I believe that this measure is particularly important, especially during the current crisis.

David Martin (PSE). – Madam President, I also welcome the Commission's proposal and believe it to be an intelligent response to the crisis that we are facing. Like others who have spoken, and indeed the previous speaker, I strongly believe that this proposal must apply to energy conservation, and energy conservation measures must be a high priority of the Member States.

Reduced costs for home installation would achieve three of our cherished objectives. It would reduce environmental damage by reducing CO₂ emissions, it would assist in job creation, because energy conservation measures are very labour-intensive, and thirdly, in the long run, it would of course lower energy bills for the elderly and other vulnerable people in society.

I hope that the Commission will press ahead with this proposal, that it will persuade the Member States that so far remain unpersuaded and that it will emphasise that, as part of the proposal, you can interpret energy conservation measures as being included.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, the phenomenon dubbed the shadow economy is a very grave problem, impinging on every economy to a greater or lesser extent. It is primarily caused by excessive tax burdens imposed by the state, which encourage entrepreneurs to engage in undeclared business activities, bypassing the fiscal system. This results in enormous budgetary losses and an increase in unregistered employment.

In this context, the initiative for introducing a long-term reduction in VAT rates for labour-intensive services and locally-supplied services deserves particular support, as it provides businesses with an incentive to operate within the formal economy. Moreover, it will promote an increase in both productivity and employment. At the same time, however, potential adverse effects, such as the introduction of lower rates to promote free competition within the internal market, or a decrease in budgetary revenue, should be taken into account. Therefore, balanced and transparent measures are essential, since obtaining the trust of our entrepreneurs is a prerequisite for the project's success.

Margarita Starkevičiūtė (ALDE). – (LT) I would like to talk about value added tax from two points of view – social justice and competitiveness. From the point of view of social justice, value added tax is regressive, that is, people on lower incomes face a greater burden and therefore we then have to increase social subsidies. Perhaps we should do the opposite. From the point of view of competitiveness, Europe is a service economy. We can compete globally by using our services to attract tourists and, undoubtedly, it is important that those services are cheap. Compared with the USA, our sales tax, or value added tax, is much higher. Perhaps we should consider this perspective when talking about a more coordinated tax policy, although, clearly, all of this is a matter for Member States to decide.

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, the effects of the crisis are already clearly visible in the Polish housing construction industry, despite the country's extremely pressing need for housing. Poland has still not fully restored the housing stock which was destroyed during World War II. I support a significant reduction in VAT rates, particularly with regard to the construction of housing, as well as thermo-insulation and renovation projects, primarily, though not solely, with the aim of protecting jobs and ensuring social cohesion. An aging population in Europe means that we must pay particular attention to the provision of care and I would therefore draw your attention to the need to reduce the VAT rate in that sector as well.

László Kovács, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, I am fully aware of the shortcomings of the Commission proposals: I know that they are modest and limited in scope. However, I am also aware of the reluctance of certain Member States vis-à-vis reduced VAT rates in general and the extension of reduced VAT rates in particular. This reluctance certainly sets limits on our ambitions, as we need unanimity in the Council.

For the Commission, there were two options. The first was to table an ambitious proposal, which is fully justified, and to run the risk that it might not be approved by the Council. In that case, 18 Member States that currently apply reduced VAT rates on locally supplied, labour-intensive services should return to the standard rate. An increase in VAT rates from 5-6% to 20-25% would certainly result in the bankruptcy of thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises and in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs at a time of serious economic crisis.

Therefore, the Commission has chosen the other option, which hopefully will receive unanimous support in the Council: saving jobs, giving support to the SMEs and boosting the building sector.

As many speakers mentioned the issue of energy efficiency, I want to repeat what I already said in my introductory remarks: in April we will come forward with a proposal that will be focused on climate change and energy efficiency issues, a review of the Energy Taxation Directive, and the Green Tax Package proposing reduced VAT rates for green services that are aimed at increasing energy efficiency.

I have been encouraged by the understanding and support expressed in this plenary debate. I thank Parliament for its support and understanding, and in particular the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Ms van den Burg for their work.

Ieke van den Burg, rapporteur. – Madam President, I am happy with this debate. We have almost unanimous support for the Commission's proposal and I hope that will encourage the Commissioner to have follow-up discussions with the Council on this issue.

I also noticed that many of my colleagues have indicated that they would like their governments to use this instrument nationally in the present crisis. I would like to emphasise once again, particularly regarding energy efficiency and renovation of buildings, that this is a very good instrument. I hope that even the Council will try to coordinate activities on this and decide that together they will take these measures, because then it would be an extra boost, an extra impulse, for the economy.

We have a task at national level to convince our national colleagues and our national governments that they should use these more targeted and more effective instruments in the present situation in order to create more employment – not only to save jobs but also to create new jobs – to legalise the shadow economy and to make these local services available to the many consumers and citizens who will be feeling the effects of the crisis.

I think it is an excellent instrument and I very much hope that the Council will accept this decision and maybe – even more – coordinate and decide to apply this instrument.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday, 19 February 2009.

(The sitting was suspended at 10.10 a.m. pending voting time, and resumed at 10.35 a.m.)

Written statements (Rule 142)

Christine De Veyrac (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted that we are at last addressing here in this House the issue of broadening the scope of reductions in Member States' VAT rates on a whole range of goods and services.

The text that the European Commission presented on 28 January 2009 proposed applying a reduced VAT rate to several categories of activity, particularly the catering industry.

It is a measure that I have been wanting and for which I have been calling for a number of years. After years of inaction, I hope that Member States can at last agree on this measure.

The European Commission's proposal follows the German declaration of 20 January, stating that it was no longer opposed to the introduction of a reduced rate in this sector. This coincidence gives us cause to hope for significant changes.

In this time of crisis, I think that if a measure of this kind came into effect, it would make it possible to increase workers' salaries in this sector, and would give restaurant owners the opportunity to recruit more staff.

The text on which we are voting today must send a strong signal to that effect.

Thank you for your attention.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) For our fellow citizens, tax harmonisation constitutes a basic safeguard in the fight against economic inequalities and social dumping in Europe. I call on the Council to work towards this.

For all that, it seems clear that measures related to derogations on normal VAT rates may in some cases, taking into account the particular economic and social circumstances of each Member State, be able to act as a lever on locally-supplied services, including labour-intensive services. I am also very pleased that this proposal for a directive allows the application of reduced VAT rates to some services linked to the construction sector as well as catering services.

I also wish to thank the Commission by emphasising the technical adaptations that we and the members of the Intergroup on Family and Protection of Childhood have always wanted, concerning the application of reduced VAT rates to essential products for children, in particular babies' nappies which represent a very significant item in the budgets of young families. The same goes for some equipment for people with disabilities; these provisions are heading in the right direction.

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) The issue of taxation falls within the remit of the Member States. However, common frameworks should apply, guaranteeing that the law is both transparent and free from ambiguity, and that the market operates cohesively and smoothly. The inhabitants of my country are unable to comprehend why a zero VAT rate is applied to children's items in Ireland and Great Britain and a rate of 3% applies in Luxembourg, while Poland is expected to increase its VAT rate from 7 to 22%.

Now, when we are undergoing a painful economic crisis, it is essential to seek solutions which will promote increased productivity and a growth in employment. Harmonising VAT exemptions is thus highly recommended, in order to avoid any discrimination that might result from the implementation of this tax. Reducing VAT rates for labour-intensive services on local markets, including the catering sector, should be considered as a very positive step, particularly for SMEs and artisans. Naturally, the lower costs will also benefit consumers. Furthermore, the initiative should restrict the 'informal economy' and undeclared labour. I therefore support the simplified and clarified regulations of Directive 2006/112/EC, the VAT Directive, since their objective is to place the Member States on an equal footing. The current situation demonstrates that it would be worthwhile to conduct an objective debate on the rationale of applying the tax on goods and services in the form hitherto employed. There are countries, the USA for example, where other forms of indirect taxation are applied and which, generally speaking, lead to a more dynamic, flexible and efficient economy. I spoke of this some time ago.

Véronique Mathieu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) At a time when Europe is faced with a major economic crisis, adopting this report will make it possible to revitalise the services sector by asking Member States to accept a reduced rate of VAT of 5% on labour-intensive services and locally supplied services. This would affect the catering trade, home-care services and hairdressing salons.

Exemptions from VAT need to be harmonised because there are currently 11 Member States that are entitled to derogations and apply reduced rates for the catering trade for example.

A reduced VAT rate will benefit employment levels and will help in the struggle against the hidden economy as well as stimulating local demand.

In my opinion, we should go further still and also consider a reduced rate for cultural products such as CDs or videos, as well as environmentally-friendly products such as green cars or energy efficient buildings. The reduced VAT rate for some sectors will help to boost SME activity, while encouraging the establishment of an economy that is more environmentally friendly.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing. – (RO) In July 2008, the European Commission adopted a proposal on applying reduced VAT rates after 2010.

The sectors targeted in particular by this measure are labour-intensive services and locally provided services for local consumers such as services linked to the housing sector and the renovation of residential heating systems, as well as services linked to personal care and the catering industry.

The proposal is also part of the Small Business Act initiative which aims to stimulate activity in the more than 23 million small- and medium-sized enterprises in the EU with a view to developing the economy and creating new jobs.

I support this report because carefully targeted VAT rate reductions offer specific benefits such as a means of creating a tax system which promotes jobs, increases productivity and reduces the black economy, especially in the current financial crisis.

I call on the Commission to closely monitor the application of these reduced VAT rates in Member States in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the internal market. I congratulate the rapporteur.

José Ribeiro e Castro (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Today's debate and vote on reduced VAT rates will send a clear signal to the Council along the lines stressed by the Intergroup on Family and Protection of Childhood over the years. Among the various amendments that I support, I would highlight those directly affecting children's goods. This is an important measure which supports families with children and allows them to reduce the unfair tax burdens to which they are subject. I welcome the Commission's proposal to resolve, once and for all, the nonsense of the nappy debate and the issue of car seats for babies. However, it is also important, as the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats has argued, for the reduced VAT rate to be applied to children's footwear and clothing throughout the EU, and not just in the Member States which had this system in 1991. We call on the Council not to lag behind Parliament and to go as far as necessary in understanding the legitimate needs and aspirations of families. I hope that we are finally at the successful end of a long struggle and demand by civil society and Members of this House to defend the tax rights of families who should not be penalised because of the children they rear, support and educate.

Bogusław Rogalski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) Levelling the playing field for all the Member States, and increasing transparency and cohesion within the borders of the EU, are matters of crucial importance, as reduced VAT rates will enable the internal market to function smoothly

It should be possible for the Member States to apply a reduced VAT rate to locally-supplied services, for example. The application of the reduced rate should most certainly be left in the hands of the Member States, while the tax system should promote employment, increase productivity and curb the 'informal economy'. It is equally essential to harmonise VAT exemptions, as this will help to ensure a balanced and uniform approach on the part of the Member States and avoid the adverse effects of applying those VAT rates.

A reduction in the VAT rates for locally supplied and labour-intensive services should have a positive impact, since it will reduce the level of undeclared labour, whilst also reducing its appeal and increasing demand within the formal economy. However, if the reduced rates are to avoid damaging the smooth functioning of the internal market, they should be applied with care.

The political objective to reducing the VAT rate is to reduce undeclared labour and potential administrative burdens.

Eoin Ryan (UEN), in writing. – We are in a global crisis, but a global crisis that is hitting locally. The turmoil started across the Atlantic, but has affected our cities, towns and villages. Measures introduced to combat the crisis and to rehabilitate our damaged economies must not concentrate solely on the national and international but on the regional and local also.

Extending reduced rates of VAT to locally supplied and labour-intensive services is a positive step in this direction. It is a pragmatic decision that has the potential to stimulate local economy and encourage local enterprise and industry without interfering with the proper functioning of the internal market.

I hope that this measure can be part of a wider approach adopted by the EU and national authorities to make it attractive to buy local, to build up local economies and consumer confidence.

Such an approach would impact positively on small and medium enterprises. This is crucial as SMEs make up 99% of all European enterprises, but the sector is suffering in the current climate. I believe that strengthening and supporting the SME sector is key in getting our economies back on their feet and building for a sustainable economic and social future.

Marianne Thyssen (PPE-DE), in writing. – (NL) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, for years, the European Parliament has been arguing for the extension of the list of goods and services to which a reduced VAT rate may optionally be applied. The call for a reduced VAT rate in the Member States for things including catering services, building renovations and small repairs, such as shoe repairs, has become ever more pronounced.

There are three reasons for this. The European harmonisation of rules on VAT rates promotes transparency and the smooth functioning of the internal market, and works as an incentive in the fight against illegal work. Moreover, at long last we can look forward to ending a time of consecutive experimental periods, and to legal certainty for a problem that has been around for a very long time. In times of crisis, these measures can be an important incentive for a number of industries.

This is why I am endorsing the van den Burg report, and I look forward to a political agreement on 10 March in the ECOFIN Council.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

4. Approval of the Minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes

5. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

5.1. Action plan on urban mobility (vote)

5.2. The petitions process (Amendment of Title VIII of the Rules of Procedure) (A6-0027/2009, Gérard Onesta) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Brian Crowley, *on behalf of the UEN Group.* – Madam President, I apologise for interrupting the vote.

Under Rule 170 of the Rules of Procedure, I am asking the Members of the House to postpone the vote on the Onesta report with regard to the petitions process, as this matter is at present being dealt with in the Conference of Presidents in the context of the reform of the procedures of the House. The Conference of Presidents will discuss the very specific reform issues dealt with in the Onesta report at a meeting on 5 March 2009, and I am asking that, if possible, the vote on this report be postponed until the Strasbourg part-session in the second week of March. I am asking the House to approve this if possible.

Gérard Onesta, *rapporteur.* – (FR) Madam President, let us try to be precise. This report amends our regulation, or rather clarifies it, in order to make it clear how petitions to the Committee on Petitions are received or not received, how information is given to petitioners, and so on.

It was approved unanimously, with one vote against I think, in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. I do not think, therefore, that this report is very controversial. There is, however, one article in which we had agreed to make it clear that if and when the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, petitioners would simply be informed if a petition that were submitted not to Parliament but to the European Commission – you know, those petitions with millions of signatures – were connected to their petition.

If I understand rightly, it is that article, because of the reference to a possible future treaty that causes a problem. Personally, I can live with postponing it until 5 March; I can even live with a ‘speed vote’ withdrawing that amendment. On the other hand, it would be very regrettable if we could not tidy up our regulation on this point when there have been so many problems in the past. I am in your hands, ladies and gentlemen.

(Parliament agreed to the request)

5.3. Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure (ERI) (A6-0007/2009, Teresa Riera Madurell) (vote)

5.4. Amendments to the Convention on future multilateral co-operation in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries (A6-0009/2009, Philippe Morillon) (vote)

5.5. A special place for children in EU external action (A6-0039/2009, Glenys Kinnock) (vote)

5.6. Implementation of Directive 2002/14/EC: informing and consulting employees in the European Community (A6-0023/2009, Jean Louis Cottigny) (vote)

5.7. Social economy (A6-0015/2009, Patrizia Toia) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Patrizia Toia, *rapporteur*. – (IT) Madam President, I propose that in paragraph 12 the words ‘the components of the’ be added before the words ‘social economy’, and the words ‘as a third sector’ be deleted, as written in the list here.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

5.8. Mental health (A6-0034/2009, Evangelia Tzampazi) (vote)

5.9. Follow-up of the energy efficiency national action plans: a first assessment (A6-0030/2009, András Gyürk) (vote)

5.10. Applied research relating to the common fisheries policy (A6-0016/2009, Rosa Miguélez Ramos) (vote)

5.11. European professional card for service providers (A6-0029/2009, Charlotte Cederschiöld) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Charlotte Cederschiöld, *rapporteur*. – (SV) I have been here long enough to know how pleased the Members of this House will be if I give a two-minute speech. I do not, therefore, intend to do this and will instead merely say that this is an example of how, once again, we are trying to make it easier for citizens to work and establish themselves across borders.

This can form a nice little example to use in the election campaigns and I am therefore pleased. The committee was unanimous on this issue and so that is all I have to say.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

6. Welcome

President. – Colleagues, I am pleased to inform you that members of a delegation of MPs and other visitors from the State Great Hural (Parliament) of Mongolia and the Mission of Mongolia to the European Union have now taken their seats in the distinguished visitors’ gallery. It is a great pleasure to welcome them here today.

(Applause)

The members of the delegation are in Brussels with their counterparts in the European Parliament on the occasion of the 7th European Union–Mongolia Interparliamentary meeting. This meeting has strengthened the important and growing relationship between the European Parliament and the Mongolian Parliament. The visitors have also had an opportunity to experience, at first hand, the workings of our Parliament. I wish the delegation well for the remainder of their stay in the European Union.

7. Voting time (continuation)

7.1. Community action in relation to whaling (A6-0025/2009, Elspeth Attwooll) (vote)

7.2. Community participation in the European Audiovisual Observatory (A6-0010/2009, Ivo Belet) (vote)

7.3. Sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals (A6-0026/2009, Claudio Fava) (vote)

7.4. Crop statistics (A6-0472/2008, Elisabeth Jeggle) (vote)

7.5. Rules on aromatised wines, aromatised wine-based drinks and aromatised wine-product cocktails (Recast version) (A6-0216/2008, József Szájer) (vote)

7.6. Reduced rates of value added tax (A6-0047/2009, Ieke van den Burg) (vote)

7.7. Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners (vote)

7.8. Annual Report (2007) on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP (A6-0019/2009, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski) (vote)

IN THE CHAIR: MR PÖTTERING

President

8. Formal sitting – Czech Republic

President. – Mr President of the Czech Republic, I would like to offer you a warm welcome to the European Parliament.

President Klaus, it is a pleasure for me and everyone here to welcome you today, during the Czech Presidency of the European Union, to the European Parliament, the democratic representation of the citizens of a reunited Europe.

Throughout history, Mr President, your country has always been at the heart of Europe and has played a large part in shaping European history. As far back as the fifteenth century, Charles IV, as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, made Prague the cultural and spiritual capital of Europe. We remember that the Bohemian King George of Poděbrady was one of the first great Europeans who, as early as 1462, attempted to establish a European community of states. In continuation of the tradition of your country, as the strong heart of European thinking and action, we also appreciate the important role that the Czech Republic is currently playing in our common European Union, a role that accentuated through the active discharge of the EU Presidency that the Czech Republic holds for the current six-month period.

Right from its first few days, the Czech Presidency was confronted with considerable challenges, not least the war in Gaza and the gas crisis, which led to twelve Member States of the European Union being denied their normal energy supplies. The Czech Presidency and especially the Czech Prime Minister and President of the European Council, Mirek Topolánek, and the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, Alexandr Vondra, whom I warmly welcome to this House, as well as the Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, have played a very positive role.

The Czech Republic currently bears a huge responsibility for the European Union. With this in mind, I would like to congratulate the Czech Republic, in particular with regard to the successful ratification, with a large majority, of the Treaty of Lisbon by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic on Wednesday.

(Applause)

This agreement underlines the readiness of the Presidency to continue the ratification process quickly and with a positive result and its desire to contribute to the success of the new treaty, which will be so important in terms of our ability to cope with the huge challenges of the 21st century.

Mr President, the European Parliament has taken note of the legislative priorities of the Czech Presidency and has included them in its work programme. The Joint Parliamentary Meeting that was held in the European Parliament at the beginning of this week with 'A New Deal for European Economic Recovery' as its theme was also particularly important in view of the current economic crisis.

Mr President, I believe we are both of the opinion that the current clearly perceptible national protectionist tendencies are disturbing. We must work together to counteract these tendencies, because we are all under obligation to maintain an open and free internal market, from which, at the end of the day, we all benefit. In this respect, too, we have high hopes for the Czech Presidency and also for you, Mr President, as you are known to be an advocate of a strong and free internal market.

An old saying that has been passed down from the Kingdom of Bohemia states that it is better to spend two years negotiating than two weeks waging war. All of us, including you, Mr President, and the people of your country, understand the value of dialogue, of compromise and of a cooperation, things that have been successfully pursued in the European Union for more than half a century.

Let me conclude by saying this: in this context, the elections to the European Parliament in June are also extremely important. I can only agree with you, Mr President, when, in your New Year speech, you appealed to the citizens of the Czech Republic to turn out in high numbers for the European Parliament elections.

Mr President, I wish the Czech Republic a successful and fruitful remainder of its Presidency of the European Union.

Václav Klaus, *President of the Czech Republic*. – (CS) I would like first of all to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in the European Parliament, which is one of the key institutions of the European Union. Although I have been here several times before I have never had the chance to address a plenary session. I therefore appreciate the chance to do so today. The elected representatives of 27 countries with their broad spectrum of political opinions and views constitute a unique audience, just as the European Union itself has been a unique and essentially revolutionary experiment for over half a century, attempting to improve decision making in Europe through transferring a significant part of the decision-making process from individual states to pan-European institutions.

I have travelled here to see you from Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic, the historic heart of Czech statehood and an important place in the development of European ideas, European culture and European civilisation. I have come here as the representative of the Czech state, which in its various forms has always been part of European history, a country which has often played a direct and significant role in the making of European history and which wishes to continue doing so.

The last time a Czech president addressed you from this place was nine years ago. He was my predecessor in the role, Václav Havel, and it was four years before our accession to the EU. Some weeks ago, the Czech premier, Mirek Topolánek, also spoke here, this time as the leader of the country holding the presidency of the Council of the EU. In his speech he focused on specific topics arising from the priorities of the Czech presidency and the problems currently confronting the countries of the European Union.

This enables me to approach you with themes of a more general nature and to talk about things which, at first sight, are possibly not as dramatic as the solutions to today's economic crisis, the Russia-Ukraine gas conflict or the situation in Gaza. In my opinion, however, they are of absolutely fundamental importance for the development of the European integration project.

In just under three months, the Czech Republic will commemorate the fifth anniversary of its accession to the EU and it will do so in a dignified manner. It will mark the anniversary as a country which, in contrast to some other new Member States, does not feel disappointed over the unfulfilled expectations of membership. There is nothing surprising about this and there is a rational explanation for it. Our expectations were realistic. We were well aware that we were joining a community created by and composed of people and not some sort of ideal construct developed without authentic human interests, ambitions, opinions and ideas. Interests and ideas are to be found at every step in the European Union and that is how it should be.

We saw our entry into the EU, on the one hand, as external confirmation of the fact that we had relatively quickly, over the course of almost fifteen years since the fall of communism, become a normal European country again. On the other hand, we considered – and we still do consider – the chance to participate actively in the European integration process as an opportunity to benefit from the advantages of an already highly integrated Europe while at the same time contributing our own ideas to the process. We assume our own share of responsibility for the development of the European Union and it is precisely with this in mind that

we accede to our presidency of the Council of the European Union. I firmly believe that the first six weeks of our presidency have convincingly demonstrated our responsible approach.

I would also like to repeat out loud and very clearly here in this forum, and for the benefit of those of you that either did not know or did not want to know, my conviction that for us there was not and is not any alternative to EU membership and that there is no relevant political movement in our country that would be able or willing to undermine this position. We have therefore been taken aback recently by the repeated and growing attacks against the Czechs based on the completely unfounded assumption that we are looking for a different integration project than the one we joined six years ago. This is not the case.

The citizens of the Czech Republic take it for granted that European integration has a necessary and important mission, which broadly speaking they understand in the following way. It is firstly to remove barriers which are unnecessary and counterproductive to human freedom and prosperity, hindering the movement of persons, goods and services, ideas, political philosophies, world views, cultural plans and behavioural models, which, over the course of time, have formed between various European countries for many different reasons, and secondly to exercise joint care for public assets that are of significance to the entire continent or such projects as cannot be implemented effectively through just bilateral agreements between two or more neighbouring European countries.

The effort to implement these two aims – removing barriers and making rational choices over issues that should be resolved at European level – is not and never will be completed. The various barriers and obstacles still remain and there is definitely more decision making at the Brussels level than there ideally should be. There is certainly more of it than people in the various Member States want. You are surely well aware of this too, ladies and gentlemen. I would therefore like to ask in a rhetorical sense whether you are certain each time you vote that you are deciding on a matter that should be decided on in this house rather than closer to the citizens, in other words within the individual European states? Other potential impacts of European integration are also discussed in today's politically correct rhetoric, but these tend to be of a secondary and irrelevant nature. They have more to do with the ambitions of professional politicians and the people connected with them than with the interests of ordinary Member State citizens.

I said earlier that for the Czechs there was and there continues to be no alternative to EU membership – and I am delighted to emphasise and underline this – but that is only half of what I would like to say. The other half comprises the completely logical assertion that a range of potential and legitimate alternatives exists in respect of the methods and forms of European integration, just as it has done throughout the past half century. History has no end point. To claim that the status quo, in other words the current institutional arrangements of the EU, is a dogma forever beyond criticism is an error which unfortunately continues to proliferate, even though it is in direct conflict both with rational thinking and with the entire historical development of over two thousand years of European civilisation. The assumption that an 'ever closer Union', in other words an ever deeper political integration of the Member States, represents the only possible and correct course of development for the European Union is a similar error, which is postulated *a priori* and is therefore similarly beyond criticism.

Neither the status quo nor the postulate of deeper integration bringing indisputable benefits can or should be regarded as sacrosanct by any European democrat. It is unacceptable for them to be enforced by persons regarding themselves as, to quote famous Czech writer Milan Kundera, the 'keepers of the keys' to European integration.

Moreover, it is obvious that the institutional arrangement of the EU does not constitute an end in itself but is a means to achieving real ends. These ends are nothing less than personal freedom and a set of economic arrangements that will bring prosperity. In other words, market economics.

Citizens of all Member States surely want these things but, over the course of the 20 years since the fall of communism, it has repeatedly been confirmed that they are wanted more and cared about more by those people who have experienced tyranny for a large part of the twentieth century and who have suffered the effects of a dysfunctional, centrally planned, state-run economy. Those people are quite legitimately more sensitive and more aware of manifestations or tendencies pointing to ends other than freedom and prosperity. And those people include the citizens of the Czech Republic.

The current system for decision making in the EU differs from the historically tried and tested traditional form of parliamentary democracy. In a normal parliamentary system there is a group supporting the government and another supporting the opposition. However, unless I am mistaken, this is not the case in the European Parliament. Here only one alternative exists and those who dare consider other alternatives

are labelled enemies of European integration. In my part of Europe, we lived until relatively recently under a political system where no alternatives were allowed and where no parliamentary opposition therefore existed. We learned through bitter experience that where there is no opposition, there is no freedom. This is why political alternatives must exist.

That is not all. The relationship between the citizens of the various Member States and their EU representatives is not the normal relationship between voters and the politicians representing them. There is more distance between EU citizens and their representatives than is the case within individual Member States, and not only in the geographical sense of the word. This is often referred to in various ways: the democratic deficit, the loss of democratic accountability, decision making by the un-elected but selected officials, the bureaucratisation of decision making and so on. The proposed changes to the status quo contained in the rejected European Constitution or the not-so-different Treaty of Lisbon would only exacerbate this defect.

Since there is no European demos, no European nation, this defect cannot be solved by strengthening the role of the European Parliament. This would only make the problem worse and would lead to Member State citizens feeling ever more alienated from EU institutions. The solution does not lie in trying to breathe new life into the current form of European integration, or in trying to suppress the role of Member States in the name of a new multi-cultural and multi-national European civil society. These are attempts that have failed in the past because they were not natural historical developments.

I am afraid that attempts to speed up and deepen integration and to shift decision making affecting living standards of Member State citizens more and more to a European level may have repercussions endangering everything positive that has been achieved in Europe over the past half century. Therefore let us not underestimate the concerns felt by many Member State citizens that decisions affecting their lives will be taken elsewhere and without their involvement and that their ability to influence the decision-making process is very limited. The success of the EU to date is due among other things to the fact that the opinion and voice of every Member State had the same weight in voting and thus could not be ignored. Let us not allow a situation to come about in which Member State citizens live their lives with a resigned feeling that the EU project is not their own, that it is not developing as they would like and that they are obliged merely to resign themselves to it. We could very easily and very quickly find ourselves once again living under conditions we now habitually regard as a thing of the past.

This is also closely connected to the question of prosperity. It must be said openly that the current economic system of the EU involves constraints on the market and a constant strengthening of a centrally-controlled economy. Although history has given us ample evidence that this path leads nowhere, we are following it again. The level of restrictions on the spontaneity of market processes and the level of political regulation over the economy are constantly increasing. This development has recently been further reinforced by incorrect interpretations of the causes of the current financial and economic crisis, attributing it to the market rather than to the actual cause which was, on the contrary, political manipulation of the market. It is again necessary to remember the historical experience of my part of Europe and the lessons we have learned.

Many of you will certainly be familiar with the name of the 19th-century French economist, Frederic Bastiat and his famous Petition from the Manufacturers of Candles, which is still a well-known standard text to this day, illustrating the absurdity of political interference in the economy. On 14 November 2008, the European Commission approved a real petition from manufacturers of candles, not just a Bastiat-style fiction, and imposed a 66% tax on candles imported from China. I could not believe that a 160-year-old literary essay had become a reality, but that is precisely what happened. The inevitable consequence of introducing such measures on a broad scale is that Europe will fall behind economically and that economic growth will slow down or even grind to a halt. The only solution lies in the liberalisation and deregulation of the European economy.

I say all this because I care about a democratic and prosperous future for Europe. I am trying to remind you of the fundamental principles upon which European civilisation has been built for centuries or millennia. Principles whose validity is timeless and universal and which should therefore still apply in today's EU. I firmly believe that the citizens of the various Member States want freedom, democracy and economic prosperity.

The most important thing at this point is clearly to make sure that we do not equate the open discussion of these matters with an attack on the very idea of European integration. We have always believed that being allowed to discuss these serious questions, being heard, defending everyone's right to put forward alternatives to the one correct opinion, no matter how much we may disagree with them, is precisely the kind of democracy

that was denied us for four decades. We, who have involuntarily spent the greater part of our lives witnessing how the free exchange of ideas is a basic precondition for a healthy democracy, believe that this precondition will be honoured and respected in the future as well. This represents an opportunity and an irreplaceable way of making the EU freer, more democratic and more prosperous.

President. – Ladies and gentlemen, Mr President, it was your wish to address the European Parliament. We have gladly granted this wish. Mr President, in a Parliament of the past you would certainly not have been able to give that speech.

(Applause)

Thank goodness that we live in a European democracy in which we can all express our opinions.

(Applause and uproar)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are one European family and, as in any family, there are differences of opinion. Mr President, I agree with you when you say – I only wish to make a few comments, but I feel obliged to do so – : we are a human community. A human community is characterised by having advantages, strengths, disadvantages and weaknesses. Together, we must strengthen the strengths and eradicate the weaknesses. I also agree with you when you say that we need to ask whether each decision that we take could perhaps have been taken elsewhere. Yes, but our national capitals must also ask themselves whether many decisions should not be taken in our towns and communities rather than at national level.

(Applause)

Allow me to make one final comment relating to our Parliament's understanding of itself: we thank you for your acknowledgement that this European Parliament is an important institution. If we were not so influential, we would not currently be the legislator in 75% of cases and we would not be a co-legislator in almost 100% of cases with regard to the Treaty of Lisbon, and then it would, in fact, be the case that decisions in Europe would be made by bureaucratic means. However, it is now the European Parliament that decides.

(Sustained applause)

Thank you, Mr President, for your visit. It was an expression of our diversity of opinion in Europe and of our European democracy, and in a democracy it is ultimately the majority that counts. I would urge us all to continue, together, to stand up for this democracy, for Europe, for unity and for peace.

(Standing ovation)

IN THE CHAIR: MRS WALLIS

Vice-President

9. Voting time (continuation)

Hans-Peter Martin (NI). – (DE) Madam President, the last time that there was such a demonstration of opinion during a visit by a Head of State or Government, the President of this House intervened very strongly. On that occasion it related to a matter that was also of concern to him personally, namely the Treaty of Lisbon. Today, when the President, the sovereign elected President of a country, is speaking and is interrupted and hassled to such an extent by the socialists, the President does nothing. Do you know what this is? This is not democracy, this is despotism. I demand that the appropriate measures be taken.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, it is in my opinion seriously demeaning to the dignity of this House, and indeed to that of the Czech Presidency, that the formal visit of President Klaus should be undermined by allowing the occasion to be used to disseminate materials to influence the outcome of the Lisbon Treaty ratification process. If this is permissible – and I would ask for your ruling on this – the logical conclusion will be a recipe for chaos in our corridors, with those on each side of the argument filling this House in increasing numbers and competitively and aggressively pursuing their points of view. Please ensure that the Bureau does not allow it to happen again.

(Mixed reactions)

Martin Schulz (PSE). - (DE) Madam President, thank you very much. I suggest that you all listen to what I have to say before you start your shouting.

A fellow Member, who often recalls things differently, has just spoken. I would like to remind you of the following: when Prime Minister Sócrates wanted to speak here in connection with the signing of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, he was unable to do so by virtue of being shouted down. President Klaus was able to speak here unhindered. That is the difference between us and them. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

President. – We now continue with the vote.

9.1. European Security Strategy and ESDP (A6-0032/2009, Karl von Wogau) (vote)

9.2. The role of NATO in the security architecture of the EU (A6-0033/2009, Ari Vatanen) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Ari Vatanen, rapporteur. – Madam President, I apologise for taking up everyone's time and delaying lunch but I do it only once in 10 years so maybe you will not mind. In fact I am like the Member of the Finnish Parliament who rose to speak only once in all his years in the Finnish Parliament and what he said was: 'could you close the window, please'.

I would like to say a few words in relation to these three reports, which are all part of the same package, which includes the reports by Mr von Wogau and Mr Saryusz-Wolski. At the moment we are looking for solutions to the financial crisis. That was self-inflicted and we are saying this crisis must not be repeated, but what about the *raison d'être* of the European Union to prevent wars and human crises? They must not be repeated either, and they do not fall on us like the roof in the Parliament building in Strasbourg. They need not be repeated, but only on the condition that we work together.

I remind you that peace is not the monopoly of this side of the House. Peace belongs to everybody. Peace-building is our common duty. It is a little bit like love. It is unconditional. We have to be idealistic in this life. We have to look far away, like when we run in a forest. You do not look at your feet when you run in a forest. You look far away and then you know where you are going and you automatically put your feet in the right place. That is what we have to do. We have to be brutally honest and remember why the EU was formed: it was to build peace.

All I am saying now is that, if we are to respect the inheritance of Mr Monnet and our forefathers, we should belong to just one party and that party regarding peace-building is called the "Yes I Can" Party. Only then will history give us a standing ovation. And the window is open.

– Before the vote on paragraph 29:

Ari Vatanen, rapporteur. – Madam President, I am sorry to take up Parliament's time. I simply wish to delete the following sentence regarding the EU Operational Headquarters from paragraph 29: 'emphasises that the proposed EU Operational Headquarters provides the solution to this problem';.

(The oral amendment was accepted.)

– Before the vote on paragraph 43:

Vytautas Landsbergis, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group. – Madam President, I have two oral amendments to this paragraph. The first is that the words 'human rights and the rule of law' be put in the first place in the points of concern and not the last. Please support this more European position.

The second oral amendment concerns the second part of the paragraph, on Russia as a democracy in an undefined future. As there are very sovereign concepts of what democracy means, it would be better to add something. Therefore, my oral amendment is to insert the following after the word 'democracy': 'and refuses military threats as a means of political pressure on its neighbours'.

As we cannot support such policies, please support this amendment.

(The oral amendments were accepted.)

9.3. The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (A6-0502/2008, Pasqualina Napolitano) (vote)

9.4. Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (A6-0037/2009, Konrad Szymański) (vote)

9.5. Financing of actions other than Official Development Assistance in countries falling under Regulation (EC) 1905/2006 (A6-0036/2009, Thijs Berman) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Thijs Berman, rapporteur. – Madam President, I would like to refer this report back to committee under Rule 168(2). Both this democratically elected Parliament and the European Commission see the necessity to cover some modest forms of cooperation between the EU and developing countries, actions that are not strictly speaking poverty alleviation, such as exchange programmes between universities here and there.

The budget for development is not meant for this kind of cooperation, but some Members insist on using a legal base that would lead us to finance these actions with the development budget while that is precisely what we seek to avoid with this report.

We did not reach an agreement. If Amendment 1 is adopted, then this report would become incoherent and contrary to the interests of the world's poorest people. I consider, therefore, that we should refer this report back to the Committee on Development in order to agree on a legal base having the support of a clear majority of this House.

Michael Gahler (PPE-DE). – (DE) Madam President, there are indeed differences of interpretation. The legal interpretation by the Committee on Development is opposed to the interpretation by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market, and it is opposed to the legal interpretation by the legal services of our Parliament, to the case law of the European Court of Justice and to the view of the Council and the Commission, and therefore we, in the majority, insist on using the legal base as set out in this amendment.

I ask therefore for the application for referral back to committee to be withdrawn. As regards the substance of the report there are no differences of opinion. We agree on the substance, it is only with regard to the legal interpretation that there are differences and a referral back to committee will not change those differences.

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). – Madam President, I would like to second the rapporteur. Following the debate we had here yesterday, and in view of the Commission's contribution, I very much agree that we need more discussion and that we need to find a proper legal basis for actions that are not pure ODA actions – but are still very important for development cooperation with developing countries – and therefore do not fall under the other instruments regarding cooperation with industrialised countries, nor under the current DCI.

It is also very important to freeze the money foreseen for the DCI for cooperation in accordance with ODA criteria, so I support our colleague Mr Berman in his request for more time for consideration.

(Parliament agreed to the request.)

9.6. Organisation and operation of the Publications Office of the European Union (A6-0426/2008, Hanne Dahl) (vote)

10. Explanations of vote

(Oral explanations of vote)

- Motion for a resolution (B6-0100/2009): Role of the European Union in the Middle East

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I rise to explain the fact that I was one of only five Members of this House who voted against this resolution. I did so, not because I do not want economic help to go to those who have suffered tragically in this crisis and assistance to be given to them for that reason – that is absolutely right – but simply because this resolution, like most resolutions on the Middle East, is defective. It is defective because it does not establish the rights and wrongs of the situation and, without that, the resolution cannot and should not be allowed to pass.

The fact is that we are where we are in Gaza because of the actions of the Hamas group, who have rained bombs and rockets on a sovereign state, which has the right – as has every sovereign state – to react and defend its own people. Until the responsibility for this crisis is made clear in resolutions of this Parliament, then the resolutions themselves cannot be effective. The time has come for this Parliament to say to Hamas: ‘Recognise the State of Israel, negotiate with it, end the anti-Semitic views of your charter and then we can start the peace process’.

- Report: Glenys Kinnock (A6-0039/2009)

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, it is essential that adults take more responsibility for the conditions faced by children and the opportunities they have in life. I am thinking, for example, of armed conflicts in which children are embroiled, where they are often forcibly conscripted against their will, face mortal danger and hunger, and lack access to medical care. However, I voted against the report, owing to its pro-abortion stance. It is particularly perverse to appear to act in the interests of children whilst, in fact, promoting initiatives that would deny their very right to life.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, it was the great philosopher, Whitney Houston, who once said: ‘I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside.’

What is interesting about this report is that for the first time we are, in many ways, looking at the key for future development. We are notably looking for child development and child education, and not only female child education – if you teach the woman, you teach the family – but also primary education.

There is a simple flaw in our thinking on primary education: we always seem to think that the state has the solution. I urge all my colleagues in this House to look at the solutions that have been highlighted by the E. G. West Centre at the University of Newcastle, which looks at private education for the poor. Where the state has failed to provide education for poor children, parents themselves have come together, finance non-state education and, therefore, are also able to subsidise the non-working poor. I would urge everyone to look beyond the state for solutions to help the very poorest in our society.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM). – Madam President, I voted against the Kinnock report with a very heavy heart, because the problems the report identifies are very important. Tragedies are happening all over the world, but the basis of her report is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and we move on, we do more and more on the basis of a very flawed convention.

This convention was always a compromise; it was always a mixed bag. On the one hand, it has many good things, but, on the other hand, it has some absolutely inappropriate parts. It was written in 1989, in an age before we knew about predators. For example, it has rights to full access to the mass media in all communication to children and vice versa.

So we have based this whole report on a very flawed convention, which also places the state as the only arbitrator of the best interests of the child, as opposed to the family, which in fact sets the parents as the nurturers and the guardians but not as the determiners of rights. So I had to vote against it. It also includes abortion, which has no place in children’s rights.

Daniel Hannan (NI). – Madam President, I think our constituents would be interested to see how far we have gone in these fields. In the run-up to the Irish referendum, and then especially after it, we were told that the European Union was not really progressing towards a common foreign policy and that it certainly was not meddling in the field of abortion law, and yet here we have those two issues tied together in one report. Despite all the promises we made about listening to the people and tailoring our policy to suit their demands, we have carried on regardless.

There was a very neat illustration of that earlier this morning when we listened to the President of the Czech Republic. He made a speech that was in some ways almost platitudinous. He made the very banal and unarguable point that governments are better when there is an opposition and that we should tolerate other points of view. What was the reaction of this Chamber when he said that we should tolerate other points of view? People in the PSE and the PPE-DE Groups turned their backs and walked out. Not only will they not respond to alternative points of view, they cannot even bear to listen to them. What neater example could you have of this House's attitude towards the electorates out there? If you think I am wrong, prove me wrong: hold the referendums you promised, put the Treaty of Lisbon to the people. *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est*.

- Report: Jean Louis Cottigny (A6-0023/2009)

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, the transposition of Directive 2002/14/EC on European works councils and consulting employees is particularly crucial in a time of crisis, when it is necessary to ensure that management goes hand in hand with social responsibility, and to ensure that, where jobs cannot be saved, the employees are guaranteed training and a smooth transition to their new workplace. The framework Directive should be implemented in Member Countries by both sides. I therefore voted in favour of Mr Cottigny's report.

- Report: Patrizia Toia (A6-0015/2009)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, the social economy plays a vital role in local and regional development. As set out in the Lisbon Strategy, it forms an integral part of a common employment policy. Statistical data has shown it to be an influential sector of the economy, creating new jobs within the EU and providing jobs for 11 million people, which represents almost 7% of the labour force. It is also worth emphasising the role played by the social economy in rural areas, promoting economic development by regenerating declining industrial zones and creating and sustaining new jobs.

We can therefore see that the social economy has become an indispensable part of ensuring stable and sustainable economic growth, by virtue of the crucial role it plays in solving new social problems. Its role has also been strengthened in traditional sectors, such as commerce, agriculture and industry. It is therefore essential to incorporate the social economy into all strategies which aim to foster industrial and socio-economic development.

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, it is not only the crisis which has brought about the need to identify the market presence of associations, foundations, cooperatives and the entire social economy, which involves citizen stakeholders and has both a social, and also a measurable economic dimension, in terms of its contribution to GDP. However, now, in particular, every job created, every new improvement in the quality of social services has a specific value. I support the report and anticipate a new approach on the part of the European Commission, involving organisational and financial support for the social economy, such as the simplification of the administrative procedures for obtaining EU funding. I therefore voted in favour of the report.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, in reading through this report, I came across the definition of a social economy and I was interested to see what the definition was. It pointed out two things that struck me: one was social objectives over capital, and the other was the principles of solidarity and responsibility. Furthermore, it talked about democratic control by members. No mention was made of the willing and free exchange between buyer and seller in order to produce the profit which can then be reinvested to create jobs. What could be more social than making a profit to re-invest to create jobs for your population?

When we start to focus on so-called social needs, rather than the need to create profit and the need to make sure that we can create jobs and spread wealth throughout an economy, we end up in the trap that Hayek, the great Austrian economist, – and also Ayn Rand – warned about at the beginning of the last century where we forget about profit and start on the slippery slope to serfdom. For that reason, I was against this report.

- Report: Evangelia Tzimpazi (A6-0034/2009)

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I am delighted that we continue to take mental health with some seriousness and some priority here in this House. It must remain high on the EU health policy agenda, as one in four people will experience a depressive illness at least once in their lives, and by 2020 it will be the most common illness in the developing world.

However, I am afraid that in Member States, including my own country, we have the theory; we talk the talk. Our mental health policy is articulated in a document called *A Vision for Change* and many of the calls for action in the rapporteur's report are stated in our national policy or, indeed, are enshrined in our legislation.

But I am afraid the coalface delivery of mental health services continues to be completely unfit for purposes. There is a huge disconnection taking place between the theories and the reports, and we are always – particularly in my country – an action plan away from action. I am afraid mental health services and delivery to those who require them continue to be the Cinderella area of most mental health policies in all our Member States. This must change.

Neena Gill (PSE). – Madam President, one in four people experience mental health problems at least once in their lives. Eight of the ten leading causes of disability are mental health issues, and mental health problems have a huge effect on those not directly affected. Therefore, we urgently need to update mental health legislation that can properly develop an awareness of the importance of good mental health.

The message I have been trying to get across in my constituency in the West Midlands is that the media, the internet, schools and workplaces all have a vital role to play in making the public aware.

However, we also need more research into the field of mental health and the interaction between mental and physical health problems, and an explanation of how mental health initiatives might be funded under the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. This needs to be undertaken urgently.

Employers also need to promote a healthy working climate, paying attention to work-related stress and the underlying causes of mental disorder at the workplace, and tackling those causes. I was therefore very pleased to support this report.

Ewa Tomaszewska (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, 90% of suicides are the result of mental health problems. The number of people affected by depression and other civilisation-related diseases, caused by stress and the pace of life, is markedly increasing. The ageing of Europe's population is linked to an increase in the number of people who fall victim to age-related diseases. Efforts to prevent and diagnose mental health problems, combat exclusion and stigmatisation, and provide support for sufferers and their families, are significant steps towards protecting the health of our society. I have therefore given Mrs Tzampazi's report my heartfelt support.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM). – Madam President, I did vote for this report but I felt that there was a missed opportunity here – missed in committee – to include electro-shock and to once and for all recommend a ban on this most torturous of treatments that we still use in many countries in Europe.

Another area where I have serious questions is the growing movement towards assessing all small children for mental health problems and medicating appropriately. Although this report fortunately does not go that far, there is a casual reference to the assessment of children. Many children, if you assess them as children, would not seem normal and yet they are developing well. The key question we must ask ourselves, in the face of growing mental health problems, is: why is it getting worse, particularly in the face of suicide? Are we not allowing human society to exist in a way that enables people to develop and live in a normal, healthy way? If mental health is getting worse, we have to give a lot of thought to the society we are creating.

- Motion for a resolution B6-0097/2009: Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners

Leopold Józef Rutowicz (UEN). – (PL) Madam President, I am opposed to the resolution and I have voted against its adoption for the following reasons:

- 1) there is a crisis and the EU, and other institutions, face serious problems which require their attention;
- 2) the cost of investigating the alleged flights, which was borne by the EU, amounted to millions of euros and exposed cases involving those who bestially murder, and have murdered, innocent people, including EU citizens, and it is our duty to protect our citizens and provide assistance to victims of terrorism.

The extremely emotional attitude towards the flights, the apparent creation of yet another, costly political scandal, had no added value and placed the burden of cost on European taxpayers. They say that learning comes at a price and we have paid that price. We should, therefore, bear this in mind this when addressing similar problems in the future.

- Report: Miguélez Ramos (A6-0016/2009)

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I very much welcome, and indeed I supported, Mrs Miguélez Ramos' report on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy.

This calls for improved and advance use of applied research. The issue of conservation and maintenance of our fishery stocks is a vital one in which it is very difficult to get a balance and call it right. Using the most up-to-date science as a tool can only help the task ahead of us.

However, much as I appreciate the report, I would like to caution that in these straitened economic times we must be aware of duplication of effort and avoid same. It will be necessary to ensure that we are not, at Community level, doing what is best left to Member States.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, when we look at applied research, I wonder whether we should be looking into the defects of the common fisheries policy. Let us not forget that for over 40 years we have had a common fisheries policy that was designed to run European commercial fishing on a sustainable basis, but has failed to deliver either environmental sustainability or development of the fishing industry.

We should also contrast this with the property-rights-based approach of countries such as New Zealand, where the Government recognised that by giving people a vested interest in maintaining a resource they would fight to preserve it. We can also look at Iceland, where we have a successful market-oriented approach with individual tradeable quotas.

Of course, we can apply new technology and new research with all the will in the world, but if we continue to have a system where, despite all the innovation, governments tell individual fishermen in detail how much they can fish, then all the applied research will be a complete waste of time. It is time to scrap the common fisheries policy.

- Report: van den Burg (A6-0047/2009)

Neena Gill (PSE). – Madam President, in the current difficult economic climate, this report brings the kind of joined-up thinking that is desperately needed. VAT reductions will help most the people who need it most – the people who earn less than others. I believe this report is also about job creation, and that is why I supported it. It is about making sure that jobs do not disappear into the black economy. I hope that it will be implemented quickly, especially in my region, in the West Midlands.

We also need to stress that we have to allow Member States to reduce VAT on certain items to battle against climate change. Providing people with an incentive to 'buy green' is exactly the kind of market-based instrument that will reap the greatest benefits. VAT reductions across the world are used to encourage people to buy energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly fridges, freezers and other goods that use up large amounts of energy, and cheaper prices for these products will help the less well-off.

My Government in the UK has taken the lead on this issue by reducing VAT by 2.5% until 2010, and I hope other Member States will also follow suit.

Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE). – (FR) Madam President, the only battles we are sure to lose are those we do not join.

By retabling our amendments aimed at a fairer application of a reduced VAT rate – especially, for example, on children's clothes in the new Member States, so as to put them on the same footing as the older ones – we wanted to send a strong message to the Commission and the Council.

We succeeded on all counts, with one exception. Our amendment seeking to spare the catering trade from the bureaucratic burden of having to apply two different rates of VAT on one bill was narrowly defeated.

Our group wants to leave the choice of applying a single reduced rate for the catering trade to Member States which opt for a reduced rate. This is not possible with the text of the Commission's proposal because this text imposes the application of different rates depending on whether the service at your local restaurant does or does not include a glass of beer or wine. How can anyone understand that?

I recognise that some of my fellow Members had not properly understood the significance of our amendment, but the strong signal sent by Parliament on this issue remains. It was worth the effort. Madam President: I am very pleased that I and my group have persevered in fighting the left's evil obsession with confiscatory taxation. We have to put an end to this 'tax-mania'.

- Motion for a resolution B6-0097/2009: Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, this is perhaps the most difficult issue for a free society. How does a free society combat those who wish to destroy it? That is the decision we have to make. It has to be a balance. Of course, we must protect human rights and of course the legal process should prevail, but sometimes in the world in which we live it is necessary to take extraordinary measures. We cannot in Europe, and in the countries of Europe, rely solely on the United States to do it.

We are presently witnessing in my country a trial of eight people who have been accused of trying to blow up eight airliners. They did not succeed. I do not know whether they are guilty, but that plot did not succeed. We have to ensure that a free society has the right tools and the right measures in order to fight and defeat those who would destroy it. If we fail to do that, we fail the people whom we are sent here to represent.

- Reports: Karl von Wogau (A6-0032/2009) and Ari Vatanen (A6-0033/2009)

Colm Burke (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I recommended to my delegates from Ireland to abstain in the votes on both the von Wogau and Vatanen reports, because Ireland has retained its neutrality.

Our position in relation to that and our involvement in the European Union have been written into protocol. Ireland has a triple-lock system in relation to deploying troops to any other country: it must be under a UN mandate, and it must be approved by the government and by the Oireachtas, the Irish Parliament. That will continue under the Lisbon Treaty.

That does not mean that Ireland is not prepared to play its part, especially in peacekeeping roles. For instance, we have been very involved in Chad, with great success. This is under a mandate from the UN: the UN could not provide the troops, and the European Union stepped into breach. That mandate expires on 15 March 2009. It has been a very successful 12 months from a peacekeeping point of view, and long may that continue. Ireland will continue to make its contribution in a peacekeeping role, whether this is through the UN or the European Union.

- Report: Ari Vatanen (A6-0033/2009)

Tunne Kelam (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I voted in favour of paragraph 43 of the Vatanen report only because of our colleague Mr Landsbergis's oral amendment to it that the House finally approved. I still prefer, and declare my support for, the original version of paragraph 43 that ends, 'security proposals that the Russian Federation has recently advanced would seriously undermine the credibility of EU security structures and strike a wedge into the EU-US relationship'. Having attended this week's session of the EU-Russia Cooperation Committee, I came to the conclusion that we cannot ignore what our colleague, Mr Vatanen, has called a 'brutal reality' – namely that the strategic goal of the Russian Federation is still, alas, to split the EU partners into good and bad ones and to emasculate NATO.

David Sumberg (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on this, because of the absolutely brilliant address that we heard from the President of the Czech Republic. He reminded us of the history of his and many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, which were occupied by the Nazis and then, effectively, by the Communists. That really demonstrates the vital importance of NATO and its maintenance.

The European Union has a role in society, but the principal defence of the West is still NATO, and it is so because it is our alliance with the United States of America.

One of the disturbing features of this Parliament, which I find on so many issues, is an undercurrent and sometimes overcurrent of anti-American feeling. It was the United States that ensured that we are speaking here as free peoples, and NATO guarantees that vital alliance for the years to come.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). – Madam President, for most of the last century – and most of this century so far – NATO has helped to keep the peace. Yet there are those in this House who seek to undermine the very institution that has allowed us to cooperate with our American and Canadian colleagues and a number of EU countries.

How are we seeking to undermine this? Not only by attacking NATO, but also by duplicating its structures. We are now seeing a situation where US and Canadian personnel can sit with EU experts in one room, under

the umbrella of NATO, and then there will be exactly the same meeting, excluding our US and Canadian colleagues, which is part of the EU structure on defence. What a needless waste of resources and time.

We must remember the vital role that NATO has played, but we must also not forget that part of NATO is burden-sharing. If we move towards a purely EU defence mechanism, then it will be mostly Britain and France who share that burden, while others hide behind it. Let us not forget the vital role that NATO has played – long may it continue.

Colm Burke (PPE-DE). – Madam President, I should just like to add to what I have said already. We are looking for the Lisbon Treaty to be approved in Ireland. We will retain our neutrality under the Lisbon Treaty – the Treaty will not change our position on that. We will continue to play our role in peacekeeping, once we have a United Nations mandate, and if the European Union steps into the breach, we are quite prepared for, and have in the past been involved in, that peacekeeping role.

John Attard-Montalto (PSE). – Madam President, I should like to explain that with regard to Amendment 17, which should have come after Amendment 45, both myself and my colleague next to me, Mr Grech, wanted to vote in favour of the demilitarisation of space, but unfortunately we were innocently distracted at that moment by a third party and we did not vote in this way.

- Report: Pasqualina Napoletano (A6-0502/2008)

Sebastiano (Nello) Musumeci (UEN). – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, 14 years on from the Barcelona conference and the launch of the EuroMediterranean partnership, the balance seems entirely unsatisfactory.

Shall we assess the results achieved thus far in relation to the financial commitments made? I believe it is Parliament's legitimate right and the Commission's duty to do so. Shall we pretend not to know that civil rights are completely unprotected in that Euro-Afro-Asiatic region? That equal opportunities are still lacking? That respect for religious freedom is still a dream? That economic and social growth are still marking time, while people trafficking grows at an alarming rate, increasing the flow of illegal immigrants, above all on the coast in my local area, in southern Italy, and Sicily? Under these circumstances, rather than representing an opportunity, creating a free trade area will accentuate the divide between rich and poor regions.

To conclude, Madam President, although we have doubts about paragraphs 29 and 36, my group voted in favour of the report on the Barcelona process as an act of hope in the face of so much scepticism.

- Report: Konrad Szymanski (A6-0037/2009)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). – (PL) Madam President, the Eastern Partnership is a project of the utmost importance, which is why I am eager to see it become a priority in terms of European Union foreign policy. I would like to mention four aspects on which we should, in my opinion, focus our activities.

Firstly, we need to promote democracy and human rights, as this will ensure greater political stability in those states and guarantee the protection of fundamental rights. Secondly, we need to focus on economic integration and opening up the free trade zone. This will afford all those concerned broader access to new markets, thus increasing the demand which is so vital during a crisis.

Thirdly, we need to focus on ensuring security and stability in Europe. In this instance, I am referring solely to Europe's energy security. In order to prevent another blockade of gas supplies to the EU and ward off the temptation of using monopolistic exporters, our primary requirement is greater diversity in terms of energy sources and transit networks. Fourthly, we need increased mobility and a cultural and educational exchange. These two areas of activity are interconnected and complement each other. They have an impact on the EU's positive image in the East, and increase mutual tolerance and cooperation in the field of research and development.

We need a separate debate on the subject of the Eastern partnership in the European Parliament.

- Report: Hanne Dahl (A6-0426/2008)

Richard Corbett, on behalf of the PSE Group. – Madam President, it was with great pleasure that I voted for this report, and I wish Mrs Dahl well on her maternity leave. Unfortunately, she could not be here today.

It was a telling point that as a member of her IND/DEM Group she was willing to be rapporteur to play a constructive role in the work of our Parliament, unlike her colleagues from the so-called UK Independence Party, who, I believe – if I am right – have never been rapporteurs for any report in this Parliament in the four-and-a-half years since a motley crew of 12 of them were elected at the last European elections. All they do is snipe from the sidelines, usually on the basis of ignorance, because they are unwilling to get engaged in the real work that we are doing across the political spectrum in this House to ensure that the legislation and policies the Union produces are properly scrutinised and are a fair balance of interests of our different Member States and our different political viewpoints. All they want to do is be negative and oppose everything. What a contrast between them and their colleague.

(Written explanations of vote)

- Report: Gérard Onesta (A6-0027/2009)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – One of the most important weapons in the arsenal of the rights of European citizens is that of petition. We have adopted further measures of a procedural nature.

- When a petition is signed by several persons, the signatories shall designate a representative and deputy representatives who shall be regarded as the petitioners for the purposes of implementation of the rules.
- The withdrawal of support for the petition by the petitioner is being remedied.
- It may be possible for petitions and correspondence with petitioners to be drafted in other languages used in Member State (such as Basque and Galician).
- The committee responsible must establish the admissibility or otherwise of the petition. At the request of only quarter of the members of the committee the petition becomes admissible.
- Alternative means of redress may be recommended.
- Petitions, once registered, shall as general rule become public documents.

Slavi Binev (NI), in writing. – (BG) Ladies and gentlemen, I support Mr Onesta's report, but appeal to you to consider two issues when considering petitions. The first concerns the presentation of the facts and the second concerns the fact that only the petitioner can address the Commission, and not the respondent party. In petition No. 0795/2007, the facts are presented in a biased and tendentious way, and the party affected – the Bulgarian Orthodox Church – was not asked to present its position. During its fact-finding mission in Bulgaria from 27-30 October 2008, the Commission did not ask for the views of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Thus attempts to vilify the Holy Orthodox Church in Bulgaria and to undermine its right to self-determination are promoted by the incorrect judgment on the petition submitted by the 'Alternative Synod', thereby creating conditions to mislead the members of the Commission.

The petitioners are seeking a way to decide the fate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church not through church canon which has taken shape over centuries, but through the intervention of a secular institution – the ECJ in Strasbourg.

Following the schism within the Church which was resolved by canonical process in 1998, the ECJ in Strasbourg has issued a judgment on the same internal ecclesiastical problem in a matter in which the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was not even a respondent. The truth is that no secular court has the authority or the ability to rule on ecclesiastical disputes.

Nicolae Vlad Popa (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour because I support the revision of the Rules of Procedure with regard to the petitions process as I feel that this will make improvements to the procedure in terms of evaluating and classifying petitions. The new rules will facilitate the processing of petitions, thereby supporting citizens' interests.

One of the important changes made to the petitioning process is the emphasis on the petition's privacy or confidentiality. Privacy relates to the petitioner's name and personal details, while confidentiality relates to the subject of the petition. The new rules leave the decision whether to waive privacy or confidentiality, or both, up to the petitioner.

Furthermore, I feel that the declaration of petitions' admissibility by qualified majority is extremely important as the right to petition is a vital citizens' right based on primary legislation, and this right must not be restricted by a politically motivated decision. According to the revised rules, if the committee responsible fails to reach

a consensus on the admissibility of the petition, it is declared admissible at the request of at least one quarter of the members of the committee.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Onesta's report on revision of the Rules of Procedure with regard to the petitions process.

I agree with him that it is not necessary to make substantial changes to the existing rules; rather we should improve their transparency and clarity. I also believe that we need to emphasise the importance of the technological factor as enormous progress has been made in this area in recent years, but that it is equally important not to neglect respect for individuals and their fundamental right to privacy.

- Report: Riera Madurell (A6-0007/2009)

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The proposal for a regulation on a European Research Infrastructure aims to promote the application of the so-called fifth freedom, the freedom of movement within the Union of researchers of knowledge and science, and focuses on the criteria of competition, performance and the adaptation of scientific research to the choices and objectives of capital, as expressed in the EU anti-grassroots, anti-labour Lisbon Strategy.

'Free access' to the research infrastructure of every Member State provides an opportunity for the direct exploitation by capital of every research activity funded by the Member States, for the control and programming of research to be restricted to the mechanisms of the EU and the monopolies, for the idea of excellence based on market rather than scientific criteria to be promoted and for research to be concentrated in fewer and fewer research centres/companies.

The application of intellectual property criteria, the direct link between research and production via company specialists, the operation of centres according to private-sector financial criteria and the need for them to be funded by companies and sponsors brings research within the maximum profit rationale.

Research should be carried out solely with state funding. It should be fairly divided between scientific sectors and it should be oriented towards satisfying grassroots needs and improving the lives of the workers.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The report addresses the objectives of the 2007 Green Paper on the European Research Area: 'Developing world class research infrastructures'. On the mandate of the Council, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) started developing a coordinated approach for activities in the field of research infrastructures in April 2002. Although it is indicated that the objective of the legal framework proposed is to facilitate the establishment of these infrastructures, experience has shown that it is generally the more developed countries which benefit most.

In our opinion, there is no doubt about the importance of simplifying the establishment of world class research infrastructures in Europe with the added value that these may represent in terms of improved quality of research and education, the ties established between public and private researchers and, in general, their positive socioeconomic impact.

However, we do not agree that the establishment of large-scale infrastructure should only allow the creation of more opportunities to achieve research excellence in certain areas, meaning that certain countries will be the main beneficiaries of this process. We want everyone to be able to benefit, even those who cannot set up centres of excellence, to ensure the democratisation of research in the most diverse areas. That is why we decided to abstain.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) There are many good reasons for simplifying the opportunities for cooperation on research across national borders within the EU. The proposal for a new common legal entity could be a step in this direction and the wordings of the proposal indicate that the Commission has a sound awareness of the importance of, and special working conditions involved in, research.

However, the June List is immovable in respect of the issue of tax policy. Control of tax bases is an absolutely fundamental national matter. I have therefore voted against the Commission's proposal and the report.

Adrian Manole (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) Research infrastructures are playing an increasingly important role in the advancement of knowledge and technology by offering unique research services to users in different countries.

One aspect which can be regarded as extremely important is that these services, by unlocking the research potential of every region in the EU, will attract young people to science, thereby playing a key role in creating an effective environment for research and innovation.

In less developed countries, however, and I am thinking of Romania too when I say this, limited resources and the complexity of the technical and organisational aspects present a major difficulty in terms of creating a European Research Infrastructure. As a result, given that these structures will only be able to evolve in developed countries, we must ensure that we are not going to witness a new brain-drain to these centres from inside the European Union.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of the proposal for a Council regulation on the Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure (ERI), because I believe the Member States need to adopt a coordinated approach to developing a united policy in the field of research, given that the current national and international legislative framework is inadequate for the Union's ambitious targets for this sector.

I also think it is crucial to act to improve the interface between industry and academic research, which is still too weak in some EU countries, including Italy. Finally, this research, in my opinion, should be characterised by better interconnections between public and private researchers, because it can only herald real and balanced technological progress if all those involved work together.

- Report: Philippe Morillon (A6-0009/2009)

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Morillon report amending the North-East Atlantic Convention. Nevertheless, I do not consider that the EU should be a contracting party to this Convention; rather I believe that the individual fishing nations of the North-East Atlantic should join Russia, Iceland and Norway as independent contracting parties.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Morillon's report on amendments to the Convention on multilateral cooperation in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries.

The North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, created by the said Convention, plays a valuable role in the conservation and optimum utilisation of fisheries resources, and also seeks to encourage cooperation among the States party to the Convention.

I welcome the amendments made to the Convention as they establish procedures for settling disputes and will improve the management of fisheries resources. It is therefore a useful tool for developing the fisheries industry.

- Report: Glenys Kinnock (A6-0039/2009)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), *in writing*. – With regard to the motion for an EP Resolution on a special place for children in the EU external action, I am in favour of the report as it refers to the rights of the most vulnerable in the society, namely children, but in line with this I do not agree with particular clauses which may condone abortion.

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, I voted for the report. The future of children is a topic requiring and deserving of our attention. Children themselves are asking to be consulted and want their opinions and perspectives, their hopes and dreams to form part of efforts to build a world suited to them.

In pursuing the Millennium Development Goals we should pay greater attention, in all our strategies, initiatives and funding decisions, to the priorities set by children for children. As an MEP, I have had the opportunity to travel to developing countries and work with major non-profit organisations such as UNICEF, and I am aware that there are many urgent issues to be addressed.

If we want to achieve sustainable improvements for children we must focus on the main causes for infringement of their rights, but above all we must collaborate with all of the voluntary organisations that over the years have become well rooted in these areas that are so different from Europe in terms of their culture, economy, structure and politics.

Louis Grech (PSE), *in writing*. – With regard to the motion for a European Parliament resolution on a special place for children in EU External Action, our delegation is in favour of the report as it refers to the rights of the most vulnerable in society, namely children. Although there was no direct reference to the promotion of abortion in the resolution, I want to make it clear that we do not support certain clauses which may condone abortion.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) I regard the EU as a union of values and am in favour of several of the wordings in the report which direct our attention to the vulnerable position of children around the world. It is clear that society must take responsibility for safeguarding the rights of children, for reducing child mortality in poor countries and for combating all forms of child exploitation.

However, the report also contains wordings that I find difficult to support, including the proposal to appoint a special EU representative with the responsibility to 'ensure visibility and leadership on children's rights'. The measures necessary to safeguard children's rights are, and must remain, a matter for the national parliaments to decide. If international cooperation is considered necessary, it should be sought within the framework of the United Nations, not the European Union.

In spite of these reservations, I have chosen to vote in favour of the report.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I abstained in the final vote on this report because of concerns about the wording of paragraph 44. Overall, the thrust of this report is very good, highlighting as it does the need for special consideration to be given to children in EU external actions. Therefore I support the bulk of the paragraphs in this report, but have abstained because of concerns about paragraph 44.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mrs Kinnock's report on a special place for children in EU external action.

Protecting children, whether within or outside of the Community, is undoubtedly an extremely important goal for the European Union. Over the years the Community institutions have attached increasing importance to the protection of children's rights, which must be considered during policy making. I therefore agree that children should be more involved when decisions are taken that affect them, starting at local level, where they have more opportunity to give their input on these issues.

Moreover, I would argue that in order to enable children to exercise their rights fully, action must be taken at global level on the following key areas: reducing poverty, combating discrimination and improving the level and quality of education. In order to achieve such ambitious objectives it will be essential to channel more intellectual and financial resources in this direction.

Anna Záborská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) I have voted against this motion for a resolution.

One reason for doing so is because the Commission does not have general authority in the field of fundamental rights including the rights of the child under international agreements or through the jurisdiction of the ECJ (COM(2006) 367, Paragraph 1.3. page 3). The other reason is that the European Union intends to use this resolution to assume powers which it does not have.

The resolution does not recognise the sovereignty of developing nations in the field of ethics. It runs counter to paragraph 9 of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, which states 'The implementation of this platform, including through national laws and the formulation of strategies, policies, programmes and development priorities, is the sovereign responsibility of each State, in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the significance of and full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities should contribute to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights in order to achieve equality, development and peace'.

Finally, the report also spotlights support for sexual and reproductive health, a term which has never been defined by the EU. The WHO and some non-governmental organisations use this term to support abortion. The resolution openly supports sexual and reproductive health in Article 44, without defining it or respecting the European Union's remit in this area. This is unacceptable.

- Report: Jean Louis Cottigny (A6-0023/2009)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) The universality of the current financial crisis means it will affect Member States regardless of their economic structure, therefore the rapporteur believes that we must

re-evaluate the right of employees to be informed and consulted. This right, contrary to what is usually thought, is not a procedure which prevents a company from reacting to changes. The participating parties, employers, hired workers and government institutions must understand that this procedure is best able to help them forecast the economic and social consequences of changes in a company's environment.

For this reason all European employers and hired workers must know and recognise this European Social Model procedure. Any company operating within the territory of the European Union, which faces such a change in its economic environment, should use the same early warning and preparation measures as its competitors in the European Union, and this, incidentally, would encourage honest competition between companies in accordance with internal market rules.

Proinsias De Rossa (PSE), in writing. – I support this Report which was initiated by the Socialist Group. The report is about worker's information and consultation rights. It calls on the Member States to better implement the 2002 framework directive, in particular, by:

- introducing effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions
- making sure that information is sent in due time so that workers' representatives can react before any decision by central management
- extending workforce size thresholds regardless of age or type of employment contract to cover all workers

It also calls on the Commission to start infringement procedures against Member States that fail to implement this legislation and make sure that all information and consultation directives are coherent and where necessary propose a revision.

We must give a stronger voice to workers in the decision making process of their company. This is even more important during the times of crisis, in order to mitigate or avoid job losses.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) During the debate on this report we tried to improve its defence of the rights of employees in all sectors. We therefore welcome the adoption of our proposal, which is now incorporated, as follows, into the European Parliament resolution:

'Guarantee that representatives of public administration employees and employees in the public and financial sector enjoy the same rights to information and consultation as are granted to other employees'.

We hope that Member States will take this into account, thereby guaranteeing all employees the same rights to information and consultation.

The report's vision is generally positive as it stresses the need to strengthen rights to information and consultation in the various Member States. We also hope that the European Commission will submit an evaluation report on the results achieved through the application of Directive 2002/14/EC as regards strengthening the social dialogue.

With regard to mergers and takeovers, the report could have gone further, along the lines of what has happened previously, particularly when our proposal was adopted. This aims to ensure that, throughout the process of restructuring companies, particularly industrial companies, employees' representatives have access to information and the possibility of intervening in the decision-making process, including the right of veto, in cases where companies do not comply with their contractual obligations.

Malcolm Harbour (PPE-DE), in writing. – Conservatives are fully in support of the principles of consultation and the engagement of employees in the running of successful enterprises.

However, we do not believe that this is an appropriate area for intervention at EU level.

While we generally encourage the consistent and effective transposition of EU law, we nevertheless considered that it was appropriate to abstain on this vote.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I support this report which calls for countries which have not done so to enforce a 2002 directive which seeks to strengthen the process of informing and consulting employees within the EU. This report urges the Commission to take immediate measures to guarantee effective transposition of the directive and to initiate infringement proceedings against those Member States which have failed to transpose the directive or which have not done so correctly. The report asks that workers representatives be allowed to scrutinise the information provided, that information be provided in good

time before consultation, and that trade unions be involved in the process in order to consolidate social dialogue.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Cottigny's report on informing and consulting employees in the European Community.

Directive 2002/14/EC represented a big step forward in terms of the democratic involvement of employees in decisions concerning the businesses for which they work, particularly at a time like the present when economic difficulties drive many businesses to take critical decisions such as restructuring and relocating.

However, it has been rightly noted that the directive has not been transposed correctly in a number of countries, which have adopted more limited provisions. In fact it is important to harmonise legislation among Member States of the Union, in order that European businesses might be equipped with the same tools to pre-empt and prepare for changes to the economic environment in which they operate.

For this same reason, it would be advisable to extend the scope of the directive to all European SMEs, including the smallest in terms of the number of people employed, so that no one may be left at a disadvantage.

Anna Záborská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) I support this initiative which supports employees, as informing and consulting employees are fundamental elements of a social market economy. This should not be regarded as a barrier to the development of business. In the present situation, which has been disrupted by the financial crisis, we need to strengthen the democratic right of employees to be involved in decision making, all the more because of the restructuring, mergers and relocation of production that are expected.

I believe that consulting employees is particularly important and justified in two areas: the work-life balance, and the protection of Sunday as a day of rest, which are fundamental pillars of the European Social Model and part of the European cultural heritage.

I personally supported the requirement for Sunday to be a day off with no compulsion to work submitted in written declaration 0009/2009, which is currently in the signing procedure in the European Parliament.

As for the work-life balance, this is something I recently addressed in my report on intergenerational solidarity. I quote, 'it is necessary to find a policy and means of combining "good jobs" with the domestic duties of women and men, and family planning, private life and career ambitions can only be balanced when the persons in question are able to freely make economic and social decisions and are supported by political and economic resolutions at a European and at a domestic level without this resulting in any disadvantage.'

- Report: Patrizia Toia (A6-0015/2009)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, I agree with and wholeheartedly support Mrs Toia, who has highlighted the role of the social economy as a creator of quality jobs, as well as the strengthening of social, economic and regional cohesion, promoting active citizenship, solidarity and a vision of the economy based on democratic values that put people first and support sustainable development and technological innovation.

Being fully aware that the wealth and stability of a society depend on its diversity and that the social economy makes a significant contribution to this, thereby strengthening the European Social Model and providing its own business model that fosters stable and lasting growth in the social economy, I support the rapporteur's assertion that the social economy will reach its full potential only if it can benefit from suitable political, legislative and operational conditions and prerequisites.

In view of the fact that the Commission has already recognised the concept of the social economy many times, I would echo Mrs Toia's call for it to promote the social economy in its new policies and to defend the idea of a 'different approach to entrepreneurship' that is inherent to this sector, which is not driven mainly by the profit motive but by social benefit.

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) The social economy helps to implement the four main goals of EU employment policy: to improve opportunities for residents to find work; to encourage enterprise, especially by creating local jobs; to improve the ability of companies and employees to adapt, in particular by modernising work organisation; and to strengthen equal opportunities policies, first of all by organising public policy measures, which help to reconcile work and family life. Social economy enterprises may provide great additional benefits for society, that is, involve people in the economic development of European society,

increase business democracy with the participation of members and employees, as well as apply the principles of corporate social responsibility and local service provision.

It is important to link the social economy with the goals of social cohesion and active citizenship, taking into account the character of the local social economy and its role in encouraging active participation. The activities mentioned usually help to strengthen social relations, and these are particularly important in a world in which there is increasing social isolation and separation.

Proinsias De Rossa (PSE), in writing. – I support this Report which calls on the Commission to promote the social economy in its new policies and to defend the social economy's concept of 'a different approach to entrepreneurship', which is not driven mainly by the profit motive but by social benefit, to ensure that the particular features of the social economy are properly taken into account in the framing of legislation. It also calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a legal framework that recognise the social economy as a third sector as well as to set up clear rules for establishing which entities can legally operate as social economy enterprises.

Social economy enterprises are characterised by a form of enterprise that differs from the capital enterprise model. These are private businesses, independent of the public authorities, which meet the needs and demands of their members and the general interest. The social economy is comprised of cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations and other enterprises and organisations that share the founding characteristics of the social economy.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Through our participation in the debate in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, we made several contributions and tabled various proposals aimed at improving the rapporteur's initial position. We did not in every instance manage to get our opinions accepted, and the final resolution is therefore not entirely satisfactory.

However, we recognise the important role of various forms of social economy, the wealth of diversity in its institutions and also its specific characteristics, with differing needs. We are therefore arguing for support for them. However, we believe that this must not undermine the quality of public services, particularly in areas where the social economy also plays a significant role.

We recognise that the social economy can help to strengthen economic and social development and increase democratic participation, particularly if conditions exist for support and it is not used to undermine universal public services that are accessible to the whole population. It should be borne in mind that the social economy cannot replace the resources and public management of public services, but can be an important addition.

Malcolm Harbour (PPE-DE), in writing. – My British Conservative colleagues and I are very supportive of the contribution made to the European economy by those organisations and enterprises which operate in the 'not-for-profit' sector. Conservatives have a strong belief, for example, in the benefits of communities working together, the work of charitable institutions and the voluntary sector in general, and have recently commissioned extensive research in this area.

There are, however, a number of recommendations for new European measures in this report which we are unable to accept.

We have therefore decided to abstain.

Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) We have today voted against Mrs Toias's own-initiative report (A6-0015/2009) on social economy. We agree that the social economy plays an important role in today's society, but we cannot support it being subject to different rules to other undertakings. It is not possible to draw a clear distinction between different types of undertaking and we do not believe that cooperatives and mutual societies should be favoured over small companies, for example, in respect of the possibilities for funding and other forms of aid.

Livia Járóka (PPE-DE), in writing. – (HU) I would like to congratulate Mrs Toia on her report on the social economy that points out the key role of social economy enterprises in labour market integration, as these enterprises can greatly contribute to development and toward the realisation of social cohesion through their close connection with local communities. Furthermore, participants in the social economy can integrate manufacturing processes with the aims of social well-being in their activities, and they also promote self-management. Thus, the efficient functioning of the social economy, or the third sector, is especially important when it comes to disadvantaged people. This includes the question of the employment of the Roma population, who are facing unemployment to an unacceptable degree all across Europe.

For the efficient functioning of the social economy, an appropriate legal framework is needed, meaning the legal recognition of its components whether they be foundations, cooperatives or other associations. It is important to provide easier access to credit, tax relief, as well as incentives for these organisations. It would be advisable to consider the introduction of single Community financing for enterprises that are most effective for social cohesion.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mrs Toia's report on the social economy.

I share the rapporteur's view that the social economy is becoming increasingly important in the current economic climate, since many needs are now arising that traditional economic operators are not able to meet. The social economy certainly plays an important role in realising the EU's aims such as improving employment and social cohesion and strengthening equal opportunities policies.

I also agree that the social economy should however engage with continually evolving market developments, in order to come up with effective strategies to meet its objectives. This may be achieved by setting up networks between the interested parties, as well as through greater cooperation and exchange of experiences at all levels, whether local, national or transnational.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), *in writing*. – (PL) The social economy subscribes to the fundamental principles of the European Social Model. Its basic features and values involve placing people and social objectives above capital, combining the interests of its members with the general good, and implementing a democratic control system, enforced by its members. Overall, it constitutes 10% of Europe's enterprises and 6% of the labour market.

The social economy, which is also referred to as the solidarity economy and the third sector, is a key instrument for attaining the Lisbon objectives. It possesses a significant potential for creating jobs and can effectively be employed to achieve the objective of economic growth.

The third sector plays a leading role in the European economy, combining profitability and solidarity.

In view of the financial crisis, which we have recently been observing with alarm, and vainly attempting to overcome, it is vitally important for us to ensure financial stability. Europeans dread losing their jobs and expect decent treatment. The European Union and the Member States must respond to real needs, create real opportunities and build new hopes, for the good of all Europeans.

Fostering the solidarity economy is one way of improving the situation.

I support the rapporteur's motion. The European Commission should not only promote the social economy, but should also undertake real action to develop a legal framework, within which entities such as cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations may operate, as well as drawing up a programme offering financial support, advice and training to existing enterprises and to those that are yet to be established.

Michel Teychenné (PSE), *in writing*. – (FR) The social economy needs more than ever to have a specific legal framework and Mrs Toia's report is a step in the right direction.

The European Commission has withdrawn two proposals intended to put in place statutes for European mutual societies and associations. At a time when the cracks in the capitalist system are obvious, it is odd to withdraw proposals that promote alternative and effective types of economic organisation.

Founded on principles of mutualisation and interdependence, the social economy advocates a new concept of business practice that is more human and breaks with the capitalist approach of the simple pursuit of profit. It has been expanding successfully in recent years and today represents 10% of businesses and 6% of jobs in the European Union.

The Commission's attitude may be deplorable, but nonetheless we can feel pleased about Parliament's vote. The call for the characteristics of the social economy to be taken into account in the framing of European policies is to be welcomed, as is the demand for reactivation of the specific budget heading.

Anna Záborská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) In the Resolution on Women and Poverty in the European Union (A6-0273/2005), I mention and again emphasise the urgent need to support a new Europe based on the creative coexistence of cultures and mentalities and full respect for otherness. A Europe in which the concept of responsible freedom does not cover solely the free movement of capital and in which citizens pool their abilities irrespective of their social status. A Europe in which creativity is harnessed and the dignity

of each citizen is protected for the common good. I also mention the new forms of poverty and social exclusion which should encourage creativity among those exposed to it.

Mrs Toia's report supports this approach. I welcome this and have voted in favour of the report.

As the values of the social market economy are generally in harmony with the universal aims of the EU as regards social inclusion, they should include fitting employment, specialist training and re-integration into the labour market. Social economies have shown that they can significantly improve the position of disadvantaged people. For example, the micro-loan companies introduced by the Nobel prize winner Muhammad Junus which improved the position and increased the influence of women by enabling them to improve their financial and family situations. Social innovation supports people with disabilities in finding their own solutions to their social problems, a work-life balance, equal opportunities for men and women, quality of family life and the ability to care for children, the elderly and the disabled.

- Report: Evangelia Tzampazi (A6-0034/2009)

Liam Aylward (UEN), *in writing*. – Mental ill health affects a staggering one in four people. Stigmatisation of and discrimination against those who suffer from mental ill health still persists. By the year 2020, depression is expected to be the highest ranking cause of disease in the developed world. Currently in the EU, some 58 000 citizens die from suicide each year, more than the annual deaths from road or homicides.

The need for information campaigns in schools and platforming from there into all areas of life is crucial. We as legislators, social workers and with responsibilities within our communities need to focus on early diagnosis and early intervention in order to combat the stigma.

What we have learned from research which is crucial for our services, is that mental health is strongly determined during the first five years of life. So promoting mental health in children is an investment for the future.

EU projects have already proved successful by addressing post-natal depression in mothers, improving parenting skills, organising home visits by nurses to assist future and new parents and providing resources for schools. Research shows that providing resources for schools for our young students can improve child development and reduce bullying, anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Conservatives have today voted in favour of the own-initiative report (A6-0034/2009) on mental health by Mrs Tzampazi. We respect the decision of the Member States to enter into the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being referred to in the report. We see it as only natural that Member States should cooperate and exchange experience within this area on their own terms.

However, we are opposed to the wording in the report that calls for European guidelines for coverage of mental health by the media. We do not share the view that this should be carried out at European level, but would preserve a free and independent mass media.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The restructuring of the mental health system being promoted serves the interests of capital, capitalist restructurings and the commercialisation of health, rather than the interests of patients. Most mental health services, at least those which generate a profit for capital, are being privatised within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy.

The very large majority of mental health patients in psychiatric hospitals and other welfare institutions face miserable and absolutely humiliating living conditions and there are huge shortcomings at the level of primary and secondary care.

Intervention in the health care sector by NGOs, sponsors and other 'philanthropists' other than private capital are the alibi for and, at the same time, the bridge to the full privatisation of services.

The victims, other than mental health patients, in the area of the private or so-called 'social' infrastructure are the workers, whose labour rights are being violated and who are in temporary work schemes under the constant threat of dismissal.

We support the abolition of the inhumane asylum-type form of psychiatric care applied by the bourgeois governments, the creation of an integrated network of mental health services within the framework of a single, public, free health and welfare system and the abolition of any commercial activity which does not meet the real needs not only of patients, but also of their families and all the people.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) This report seeks to draw attention to mental health, which, as indicated by the rapporteur, affects our daily lives and is a contributory factor to well-being and social justice. Conversely, mental ill-health detracts from the quality of life of people and their families and has implications for the health, economic, educational, social security, penal and legal sectors.

There is now an ever-increasing awareness that there is no health without mental health. We need to consider some of the figures given by the report, particularly:

- one in four people will experience some form of mental disorder at least once in their lives;
- depression is one of the most common disorders – affecting one in six women in Europe – and it is estimated that, by 2020, it will be the most common illness in the developed world and the second cause of disability;
- in the EU, some 59 000 suicides are committed every year, 90% of which are attributable to mental disorder;
- vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, migrants, the disabled, people who suffer abuse, and users of psychoactive substances are more likely to suffer mental health problems.

A concerted approach to the challenges posed by mental health is very important and should be tackled with the same seriousness as physical health.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this report on mental health, which seeks to ensure that this challenge remains one of the political priorities of the European Union with regard to health.

This report calls for measures to prevent depression and suicide, to encourage mental health among young people and within the education system, in the workplace and among older people. It also stresses the need to combat stigmatisation and social exclusion. The text also invites the Commission to propose common indicators to improve the comparability of data and to facilitate the exchange of good practices and cooperation between Member States to promote mental health.

Finally, I am pleased that the report makes a clear distinction between neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, and mental illnesses. Alzheimer's disease is indeed a very particular type of illness which should not be treated in the same way as mental illnesses.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The Tzampazi report deals with an important health issue. With one in four people experiencing a serious mental health problem at some point in their lives, virtually all of us will either experience a mental health problem or be close to someone who does. Mental illness still unfortunately carries a stigma, and it is imperative that Member States cooperate to eliminate that stigma and implement measures to ensure fair and equal treatment.

Adrian Manole (PPE-DE), in writing. – WHO statistics indicate that there are currently 450 million people facing some kind of mental, behavioural or psychological problem, which represents 12% of the world's population.

Similarly, it is said that by 2010 depression will become the most common illness in modern society.

For example, in Romania, in just a single hospital, the 'Dr Alexandru Obregia' Clinical Psychiatric Hospital, more than 22 000 admissions were registered in 2008, with most cases involving depression and schizophrenia.

Those categories of people who are vulnerable and marginalised, such as the unemployed and immigrants, as well as the disabled or people who have suffered abuse, have a greater predisposition to depression in the current economic crisis.

Every country is facing the problem of a shortage of medical staff who are specialised in treating patients with mental disorders. The average figure for poor countries is 0.05 psychiatrists per 100 000 inhabitants. The problem is exacerbated in very many countries by the migration of specialist medical staff. I think that we will need, first and foremost, to deal with the issue of people's mental health in a much less superficial way and that all Member States will have to establish joint programmes to limit by every possible means the spread of this problem.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I support this report which calls for Member States to develop awareness raising campaigns, to combat stigma and social exclusion and to improve mental health legislation. One in

four people experience mental health problems at least once in their lives, yet there is still stigma attached to mental illness. This report codifies the basic principles, values and objectives of mental health policy which is necessary across Europe to promote better understanding.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE), in writing. – I voted in favour of this report and am particularly concerned that the current economic crisis is putting pressure on individuals and families and could result in an increase in mental health problems.

One person in four will experience some form of mental health disorder at least once in their lives.

Depression is one of the most common disorders, affecting one in six women in Europe. It is estimated that by 2020 depression will be the most common illness in the developed world. In the EU, some 59 000 suicides are committed each year, 90% of which are attributable to mental disorder.

We need to focus as much on mental health issues as we do on physical health.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome Mrs Tzampazi's report on mental health.

I agree with the rapporteur that it is essential to recognise the equal importance of mental and physical health as factors affecting quality of life. The pursuit of mental health must concern young people, adults and the elderly, with particular attention to the latter, who are at greater risk of degenerative diseases, and to women, who are more affected by depression.

In order to ensure that the targets in question are met, we must, in particular, put measures in place to combat social exclusion and marginalisation, which can contribute towards mental disorders, alongside measures to foster mental health in the workplace, where people are exposed to numerous pressures and stressful situations that can also trigger mental problems.

Anna Záborská (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) I welcome the result of this resolution. In the intermediate group on carers, we have often discussed the potential of the EU to participate in this policy whilst respecting the principles of subsidiarity and the primacy of decisions by the Member States. I support the call for cooperation among European Institutions at national, regional and local level, as well as among the social partners in the five priority areas of support for mental health. People should be protected from stigmatisation and social exclusion regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin and socio-economic group. Their human dignity is of primary importance, and for this reason more assistance and appropriate therapy should be made available to people with mental health problems, their families and their carers.

Mental health depends on several factors, and for this reason in my report on intergenerational solidarity I have emphasised the educational task of parents as regards future generations. I have also included help for elderly or disabled family members and the irreplaceable role of women and men as carers, which is necessary to enhance the common good. This should be recognised as such by sectoral policies. Women and men who voluntarily make the decision to care for sick family members should receive financial compensation. Breaking off a career to care for relatives with mental health problems should not have a negative impact on that career or on providing financially for one's family.

I call upon the Member States to support systems for taking time off work which will also provide a solution in such cases.

- Report: András Gyürk (A6-0030/2009)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), in writing. – (LT) Efficient energy use should be one of the most important cornerstones of the EU energy policy being created. By using energy more efficiently in Europe we would ensure greater security of supply. As no essential measures are being taken, over the next 20 – 30 years Europe's dependency on imported energy (currently 50% of our energy is imported) may reach 70%, and some Member States may become even more dependent. Smarter use of energy would reduce environmental pollution. More efficient energy use is one of the most effective ways of reducing the amount of gas emissions which cause the greenhouse effect and of ensuring that the great EU climate policy plans are implemented. Moreover, measures in this area have a great influence on the competitiveness of European industry and the opportunity to achieve the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. More efficient energy use may reduce the burden on the most vulnerable consumers and eradicate energy poverty.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Energy efficiency is vital if the EU is to reduce its energy bill. It is a valuable tool for reducing our dependence on oil.

Every nation has a great deal to gain from sharing the experiences of each Member State in this field, by comparing methodologies and strategies, albeit duly framed within the context of each region.

As regards Portugal, I regret that the measures that have been implemented have not been framed within a coherent and comprehensive action plan submitted to the Commission within the statutory period. This means that my country is one of the few not to have done so, and it thus prevents us from sharing solutions.

This first assessment of the national action plans is a point of reference for dialogue in the EU and a useful tool allowing the Member States to turn the spirit of energy efficiency into pragmatic measures that will produce the expected results by 2020.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Several Member States are developing action plans, but there are problems with defining the energy efficiency objectives. The proposal to put emphasis on effective implementation of measures focusing on energy efficiency, including the development of best practices and synergies, and better information and advice to end users, therefore seems appropriate. However, the support that must be given to those with greater financial difficulties should not be forgotten.

It also seems timely that, as part of the 2009 review of the action plans, the extent to which these cover all the possibilities for economising in the area of energy efficiency should be examined in detail, without calling into question the sovereignty of each Member State. This analysis should serve to monitor the difficulties and, if necessary, take appropriate support measures aimed at achieving the proposed objective for energy efficiency.

It also seems important to support the provisions which reinforce the exemplary role of the public sector and to recognise that increasing the energy efficiency of buildings has immense potential for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the fight against climate change, in terms both of the adaptation and of tackling the causes of climate change.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – The European Union wastes more than 20% of its energy due to inefficiency, representing about 400 Mtoe (million tonnes of oil equivalent) less energy, and would also represent a huge cut in emissions. I support this report because it highlights the need to be more efficient with energy. The report gives us a target of saving a 9% loss of energy by 2016.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Gyürk's report on follow-up of the energy efficiency national action plans.

Europe's energy supply problem is now common knowledge and is closely linked to the issue of energy efficiency. The energy wasted within the EU is a luxury we cannot afford; we must redress this as soon as possible so that we do not suffer even worse consequences in the future.

I agree that at present the national action plans have only been partially implemented, meaning that the results too have been mixed. I therefore believe a stronger commitment is needed from both the public and private sectors, as well as from individual citizens.

Given the key position of SMEs in Europe, it is essential to involve them in the action plans; since they are more affected by rising energy prices, they could also greatly benefit from improved energy efficiency and their contribution would go a long way towards reaching the overall targets.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE) in writing. – (PL) Rationalising energy consumption is an extremely important activity. The public needs to know that this is the most economical way of combating climate change. However, it is not only the environment that will benefit. The better the use we make of available energy, the less energy we need and, as a result, the less we need to rely on imported energy. In the current situation, where energy is used as a political tool, the importance of this fact cannot be underestimated.

We are employing energy ever more rationally. The consequences of this policy can be measured. Since 1990, energy production in the EU has risen by 40%, and revenue *per capita* by 1/3, while energy demand has risen by only 11%. More rational energy management has thus contributed to economic growth in all the Member States.

Energy efficiency and action to save energy should play a key role in both curtailing rising demand and in reducing the amount of fuel burned.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, making more use of green energy, and more economical energy management, all provide opportunities to reduce the extent to which we rely on imported gas and oil. The European economy must become less vulnerable to fluctuating energy prices and inflation, as well as to the risk inherent in the geopolitical location of these resources.

- Report: Miguélez Ramos (A6-0016/2009)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats have chosen to abstain. Of course, we have nothing against research and increased knowledge of fisheries and related sectors. However, we believe, above all, that the EU must put its words into action with regard to fisheries policy. The EU must act quickly to put an end to the problems of overfishing and threatened stocks. This has to be the starting point and focus of the common fisheries policy.

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – One cannot underestimate the importance of paying special attention to the specific problems of fisheries and aquaculture. This is obvious in view of this sector's economic, social and political importance in the EU. In my country, Malta, both fishing and aquaculture are given special attention.

I fully concur with the Committee on Fisheries to recommend that, in the field of scientific marine research, priority be given not only to research to gain knowledge about the state of fish stocks but also to the commercial, economic and social aspects that determine fisheries management, since all these aspects are of crucial importance. We have to ensure that in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture, priority be given to applied research.

It is unfortunate that in the short term a clear conflict of interests exists between fishermen and scientists. In the long-term, objectives will be more compatible.

Research has to be undertaken in view of dwindling stocks. This will result in the disappearance of whole species. That is why it is imperative to have full cooperation in this field between scientists, fishermen and aquacultural operators.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Conservatives have today voted in favour of the own-initiative report by Mrs Miguélez Ramos (A6-0016/2009) on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy. We share the basic premise of the report that fisheries policy should have a scientific basis and that a consensus between fishermen and researchers is the basis for a policy that is geared to sustainability.

However, we believe that the Seventh Framework Programme, with its priorities and restrictions, should remain in place.

Lena Ek (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) I have chosen to vote in favour of Mrs Miguélez Ramos's report on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy.

It is important to support increased investment in research into the consequences of the fisheries policy for fish stocks, ecosystems and biodiversity. I am therefore extremely critical of parts of the EU's fisheries policy. However, Mrs Miguélez Ramos emphasises the importance of political decisions being founded on science and long-term sustainability and not primarily on the fishing industry's short-term interests, and this is something that I see as a good thing.

I am, however, critical of possible interpretations of the report that could lead to more money being used to provide financial support to the European fishing industry and to increase this industry's status. A definite environmental perspective should permeate all research in the fisheries sector.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) In December 2006 the European Parliament and the Council adopted an important decision on the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013). I congratulate myself on having, at that time, referred to the huge importance of guaranteeing more and better technological development in the area of fisheries and aquaculture.

I therefore believe that this own-initiative report is timely and is extremely important in terms of pursuing the objectives of the new reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP).

The CFP is among the Community policies most dependent on scientific research, given that the credibility of the measures adopted under the CFP rests on high-quality scientific opinions.

Furthermore, the technological development of vessels, fishing gear and engines may guarantee the sector's sustained development in the future, thus better protecting the environment and ensuring that fleets are more competitive.

I voted in favour of this report.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Scientific fisheries research is vital to ensure an appropriate fisheries management policy, which must take into account the social, environmental and economic aspects of this activity which is an essential source of food.

This research should not only assess the state of fish stocks and generate models allowing their development to be predicted, but should also help to improve fishing gear, vessels, working and safety conditions for fishermen, and the assessment of the impact of the various fisheries management systems/instruments on the employment and income of fishing communities.

However, in order for scientific fisheries research to meet the objectives set out and the needs indicated, it is vital that the necessary resources, including funding, are made available by the EU and by each Member State. That is why we support the recommendations in this respect in the report.

However, we believe that the development of scientific research absolutely demands that the value of the human resources involved be recognised. This means guaranteeing the rights of these professionals with regard to employment contracts – by combating the insecure employment relationships with which many of these researchers are faced – fair pay and access to social security schemes, among many other labour rights which workers enjoy.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of Mrs Miguélez' report on fisheries research. I am opposed to the common fisheries policy and believe that fisheries management should be a competence of Europe's maritime nations working in cooperation with each other. That cooperation would require common actions in the field of science and research and this is an area within which the EU can give added value.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of the report by Mrs Miguélez Ramos on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy.

Wise and responsible utilisation of natural resources is increasingly important given the evident and unacceptable impoverishment of these resources over the years in terms of both quality and quantity.

In terms of the marine environment it is therefore essential to consider its protection and to adopt an approach based on a careful assessment of ecosystems, considering all activities that concern European seas in a holistic fashion. It is clear that this kind of approach can positively influence the balanced development of both the economy and society, as well as the overall competitiveness of the system in the medium to long term.

I thus believe it is vital for applied research in the fisheries sector to receive more funding, including funding from the Seventh Framework Programme for Research, as stipulated in the past by previous framework programmes. We should also facilitate the creation of a network of research centres that can share specialised infrastructure and exchange useful information and data.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) We have chosen to vote in favour of Mrs Miguélez Ramos's report on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy.

It is important to support increased investment in research into the consequences of the fisheries policy for fish stocks, ecosystems and biodiversity. We are extremely critical of parts of the EU's fisheries policy on environmental grounds. However, Mrs Miguélez Ramos emphasises the importance of political decisions being founded on science and long-term sustainability and not primarily on the fishing industry's short-term interests, and this is something that we see as a good thing.

We are, however, critical of possible interpretations of the report that could lead to more money being used to provide financial support to the European fishing industry and to increase this industry's status. A definite environmental perspective should permeate all research in the fisheries sector to which extra resources are allocated.

- Report: Charlotte Cederschiöld (A6-0029/2009)

Bairbre de Brún (GUE/NGL), in writing. – I voted in favour of the Cederschiöld report because I believe that the ability for European citizens to work and live in another Member State is an important right. I support the report's intention to facilitate the mobility of professionals and to guarantee the safety of consumers.

However, there are aspects of the Cederschiöld report that I do not fully support, such as the formulations regarding abolition of obstacles to the free movement of persons and services, which could be interpreted as a statement against collective agreements in the labour market. As regards the inclusion of health care professionals in the agreement, I see a risk of deregulation of the health care sector.

Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) One of the fundamental freedoms of the EU's internal market is the freedom of movement, which allows us not only to travel freely within its borders, but also to undertake employment. The number of people availing themselves of this opportunity is continually growing, and the best example of this trend has been the mobility of workers from the new Member States, including Poland, in recent years. At present, around 2% of the EU's inhabitants live and work in a Member State other than their own.

Despite the fact that further barriers to a common, internal market have been removed, one of the principal obstacles faced by many people looking to work in a different Member State is the fear that qualifications obtained in other Member States will not be recognised. This concern has prompted today's report, which calls for the creation of a European professional card for service providers. Introducing such a card might facilitate mobility among the representatives of a number of professions, whilst simultaneously offering employers certainty as to the qualifications held by an employee in possession of such a card, and increasing not only the transparency of qualifications, but also their recognition and comparability.

I am therefore delighted that the European Parliament has adopted the report, which will most certainly have an impact on future debates on the creation of a European professional card.

Jens Holm and Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), in writing. – The ability for European citizens to work and live in another Member State is an important right and I support the intentions to facilitate the mobility of professionals and to guarantee the safety of consumers. However, there are aspects of the Cederschiöld report that I do not fully support, such as the formulations regarding abolition of obstacles to the free movement of persons and services, which could be interpreted as a statement against collective agreements in the labour market. Regarding the inclusion of health-care professionals in the agreement, I see a risk of deregulation of the healthcare sector. Therefore I abstained in the final vote on the report.

Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL), in writing. – The ability for European citizens to work and live in another Member State is an important right and I support the intentions to facilitate the mobility of professionals and to guarantee the safety of consumers. However, there are aspects of the Cederschiöld report that I do not fully support, such as the formulations regarding abolition of obstacles to the free movement of persons and services, which could be interpreted as a statement against collective agreements in the labour market. Regarding the inclusion of healthcare professionals in the agreement, I see a risk of deregulation of the healthcare sector. Therefore I abstained on final vote on the report.

Nicolae Vlad Popa (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I supported this initiative on the creation of a European professional card for service providers by voting for it as it represents a new way of ensuring the free movement of persons and services. We must encourage labour force migration and facilitate professional mobility as much as possible by speeding up the exchange of information between the original Member State and the host Member State.

According to the statistics on the complaints received by SOLVIT in 2007, 20% of them concerned the recognition of professional qualifications required to pursue a regulated profession. Creating a professional European card for service providers will remove some of the obstacles which are still obstructing European citizens who want to carry out gainful employment in a country other than their country of origin.

Furthermore, the information contained in this professional card will provide support to both employers and consumers, while also being beneficial to unregulated and non-harmonised professions.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of Mrs Cederschiöld's report on the creation of a European professional card for service providers.

I did so because, in my opinion, despite the existence of Directive 2005/36/EC aimed at encouraging professional mobility, this market is still in essence a national one. More generally, workers' mobility in the European Union remains very low, constituting a barrier to the proper functioning of the internal market as well as the pursuit of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs.

In light of this, I think it is crucial to establish European professional cards, which already exist in some cases, to cover all professions, including those that are not regulated. This will promote their recognition in Member States and thus increase opportunities for consumers to access foreign service providers more easily, thereby helping to increase integration in the European internal market.

- Report: Elspeth Attwooll (A6-0025/2009)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) I believe that considering the painful past of commercial whaling and the recent increase in threats to whale populations – such as accidental whaling during fishing, collisions with boats, global climate change and acoustic pollution in oceans – in international forums the EU must consistently and harmoniously ensure the greatest protection of whales at global level. I would urge you to oppose any proposal which might be used to legalise any whaling for scientific purposes and commercial whaling on the coast and elsewhere or equally to allow international trade in whale products.

Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) Despite efforts made and initiatives carried out by the IWC (International Whaling Commission), the situation with regard to numerous species of cetaceans is still worrying, as a large number are threatened with extinction. The whole issue of capturing whales for scientific purposes is still a 'cover' for the capture of these mammals, which is why the EU must intervene in terms of revising this international position.

Supporting the maintenance of the moratorium, opposing all proposals regarding new types of whaling, accepting that all whaling operations by IWC members should be brought under IWC control and supporting proposals aimed at ending 'scientific whaling' outside IWC control are some of the premises of this report that I consider to be essential.

Ensuring that the EU defines its political position on this subject and taking the lead in pursuing objectives relating to respect for biodiversity and the sustainable development of our planet are fundamental objectives which the EU must embrace.

I therefore voted in favour of this report.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) Like the rapporteur, I support the global moratorium for commercial whaling and the prohibition on international trade in whale products. There are also good reasons to seek an end to what is referred to as 'scientific whaling'.

When these issues are dealt with at international level, cooperation should be sought within the framework of the International Whaling Commission, not the EU.

In spite of this objection on grounds of principle, I have chosen to vote in favour of the report.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mrs Attwooll's report on Community action in relation to whaling.

I recognise the need to ban hunting of these endangered mammals, and that tough action is needed to ensure their survival. The existing moratorium on whaling has already produced good results in terms of increasing cetacean populations, although many key countries have not ratified it, meaning that whaling still goes on. I therefore welcome the call for the Commission to put forward new proposals to encourage an improvement in these results.

I also think the distinction made between commercial whaling and sustenance whaling still practiced by some indigenous peoples is important. The latter is rightly excluded from the moratorium, as is scientific research on whales, provided it takes account of the need to safeguard the species.

- Report: Ivo Belet (A6-0027/2009)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, I voted for the report. One of the main reasons for the EC's participation in the Observatory is the consideration that the Observatory's activities are helping to strengthen the competitiveness of the Community's audiovisual industry. For instance, the distribution of audiovisual goods is too often hampered by a lack of knowledge of the differences in national

legislation. The Observatory helps to surmount these obstacles by providing expertise and systematic information to the operators concerned.

Unfortunately, however, often the legislation adopted by the European Community is not sufficiently publicised in Italy. For this reason, greater legislative transparency is needed, particularly on copyright and consumer protection law and fiscal and labour law. Lastly, it is vital to boost the Observatory's capacity for monitoring new developments such as new consumption models for audiovisual products, in particular videogames and the Internet.

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) One of the main reasons for the European Community's participation in the activities of the Observatory is the precondition that by carrying out its work, the Observatory will help to strengthen the competitiveness of the Community's audiovisual industry. When distributing audiovisual goods there is often a problem of insufficient knowledge of differences in national legislation. By supplying related operators with technical expertise and specialist information, the Observatory helps to overcome this obstacle, and therefore the Community's participation should be viewed favourably. By specially purchasing information and advertising its publications, the Observatory has become the main source of economic and legal information covering various segments of the audiovisual industry, which is used by members in both the public and private sectors. Moreover, the Commission indicates that one of the Observatory's most valuable assets is its ability to set up and oversee scientific partner networks. These networks help to improve the quality of the Observatory's economic and legal analysis.

Nicodim Bulzesc (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report because the European Audiovisual Observatory is the only pan-European public service organisation dedicated to gathering and distributing information on the European audiovisual industry. It plays a vital role by providing detailed information on the sector to both public and private bodies in the field.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) I have voted against this report on Community participation in the European Audiovisual Observatory. It is for the Member States to become involved in and fund the European Audiovisual Observatory.

Iosif Matula (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of the draft report on Community participation in the European Audiovisual Observatory, a project supported by the PPE-DE Group, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I believe that it is vital for us to have maximum transparency on the audiovisual market and to ensure that as many institutions as possible have access to relevant information in this field. This is the only way that we can have real competition and meet the economic growth targets set by the Lisbon Strategy.

Secondly, it seems important to me that the Observatory brings together both EU Member States and European states outside the Community, offering an important cohesion factor at the level of all European countries. This will enable us not only to interconnect the whole continent, but also facilitate the free movement of goods and services from the audiovisual sector, thereby considerably expanding this market.

However, we must take into account the advent and development of new technologies in order to boost the Observatory's effectiveness.

I personally support the application of the provisions which expand the Observatory's scope of activity in order to provide better coverage in this area and supply even more valuable information which is useful from an economic perspective, but also for understanding the European social and cultural context.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Belet's report on Community participation in the European Audiovisual Observatory.

In my view, the Observatory's work is very important; it is the only organisation dedicated to gathering and distributing information on the European audiovisual industry and therefore has the task of fostering new developments in the audiovisual field, which have become increasingly significant in recent years as digital technology is used more and more. In addition, through its studies and market analysis it provides valuable help for both policymakers and the audiovisual industry itself.

I also agree that the Observatory's activities should be further extended to include the study of fiscal and labour law regarding the audiovisual sector, thereby strengthening its cooperation with the Member States.

- Report: Claudio Fava (A6-0026/2009)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats in the European Parliament are in favour of a generous immigration policy centred on people's needs. This meant that we ultimately chose to support Mr Fava's report because it sends a clear message to the effect that it is unacceptable for employers to exploit the vulnerable position of migrants with no documents and because it gives certain rights to those migrants with no documents that they currently lack in several of the EU's Member States. A prerequisite for our being able to vote in favour of the report was the Council's approval of Parliament's statement that Article 9 should not be precedential in any way in future, because this could make it more difficult to adopt common rules regarding the liability of contractors for their subcontractors.

It is clear to us that contractors need to be responsible for ensuring that their subcontractors observe any collective agreements that have been entered into. Employers must not be able to avoid applying labour law rules by utilising a complex chain of subcontractors. In this directive, however, liability is limited to the first subcontractor level, which is something that we do not consider acceptable. However, it is important to bear in mind that there is nothing to prevent individual Member States introducing more comprehensive legislation.

We are also opposed, on principle, to the exemption of private individuals who employ people without documents to work in their home from sanctions. We believe that people without documents are just as vulnerable, even if they are working for private individuals.

Alin Lucian Antochi (PSE), in writing. – (RO) The directive which has just been voted on marks another step towards drafting and applying common regulations and measures required to regulate the situation of immigrants, especially employees from third countries staying illegally in the European Union.

The prospect of a better standard of living created by the possibility of finding a job is one of the key factors encouraging illegal immigration. At the same time, the consequences of the benefits gained by employers include the waste of public finances and distorted competition in the economic sector, depriving illegal workers of any social insurance or right to a pension.

This is the reason why the current directive relates to immigration policy and the sanctions are targeted at employers and not the workers coming from third countries. Particular attention must also be focused on nationals from the new Member States who, in spite of their status as European citizens, are still subject to transnational employment rules, thereby limiting free access for them to the old Member States' labour market.

Measures such as forcing employers to check third-country workers' residence permits and the financial and criminal penalties provided for employers highlight the efforts of the Community and Member States to coordinate their immigration and illegal labour policies. In fact, at a time when the European Union is facing an increased population decline, we must bear in mind that the solution is not to expel but regulate the situation of these workers. It was with this hope that I voted in favour of this report.

Lena Ek (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) I voted in favour of the report on sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals.

The proposal aims to prevent the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals by employers and to strengthen the rights of workers. The person who is to be punished in the event of illegal employment is the employer who breaks the law, not the worker.

There is an absence of this type of legislation in certain countries within the EU. Other countries have legislation, but it is not implemented or observed. Common EU rules to prevent exploitation and the employment of illegally staying workers are therefore one way of raising the bar for many EU countries.

The proposal that we are voting on today has many shortcomings. If the decision had been mine, many parts of it would have been different. I would have liked to see greater protection for women involved in domestic work, for example. However, the alternative is to have no directive at all and therefore less protection for the four to eight million illegally staying third-country nationals who are currently working illegally within the EU and who, in their very vulnerable situation, are repeatedly exploited by employers.

While it is important to prevent illegal immigration and the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals, we must also ensure that we increase the opportunities for people to settle and seek work within

the EU on a legal basis. This is regulated in other directives that we, in the European Parliament, have been involved in negotiating over the last year.

Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing. – I support the Fava report on sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country workers. Some unscrupulous employers are prepared to exploit these illegal workers with wage rates below the legal minimum, appalling conditions and long working hours. Where they do get caught they must face severe sanctions.

Yet the problem is that there is a vicious conspiracy to keep the exploitation hidden. The employers made the profits which they clearly do not wish to surrender while the workers, if they expose the exploitation, face deportation. If we are serious we must have a policy that gives amnesty to those who expose the exploiters. This would change the balance of power between employees and employers in a way that would virtually eliminate the problem.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) The general prohibition of employing unauthorised workers to deter illegal immigration can only be viewed favourably, just as sanctions against employers who resort to such workers – often to exploit them – can only be viewed favourably; such employers are nothing more than modern-day slave-traders.

I have, however, some reservations. Once again the European Union is making use of an issue relying on a Community legal basis, the first pillar, to extend its competences with regard to harmonisation of the criminal law of Member States. Ireland and the United Kingdom, who have asserted their right to opt out as recognised in the treaties, constitute a notable exception.

Also, events following strike action at a fashionable restaurant in Neuilly, a favourite of Mr Sarkozy, come to mind. Its management claims to be the victim of a labour market that is too rigid or protective of a workforce to whom they pay the legal minimum wage, and the greater opportunities for regularisation through working have been opened up. The directive will further strengthen these by making it possible for an illegal worker to regularise his status simply by reporting his employer.

I fear that in practice, in countries as lax as France in this respect, all this will do nothing to limit the influx of illegal immigration.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Regardless of the need to strengthen procedures aimed at combating the use of illegal workers, it is unacceptable that this directive punishes both the transgressor and the victims.

The aim of this directive is to complement the shameful 'Return' Directive – which the Socialist Government in Portugal has adopted – by applying sanctions to employers of illegally staying workers and laying down, as a general and automatic rule, the procedure for expelling these workers, with rare exceptions.

Expulsion should not be the alternative to over-exploitation of illegally staying migrant workers.

This directive does not adopt the principle of protecting migrant workers and safeguarding those who, being forced to work in unacceptable conditions, report them. In addition, the directive does not fully protect the rights of these workers as it states that 'when back payments are not made by the employer, Member States should not be obliged to fulfil this obligation'.

By not protecting the rights of illegally staying migrant workers, given that it does not provide in general for their regularisation and instead exposes them to the threat of expulsion, this directive will make these workers more vulnerable and encourage illegal work situations which are even more hidden.

This is yet another directive which lays bare the inhuman immigration policy of the EU, which is why we can only reject it.

Carl Lang (NI), in writing. – (FR) Although this report is interesting on a number of points and sketches out a battle plan against illegal immigration, it contains some enormous stumbling-blocks. There are no specific measures to protect the internal and external borders of the Union. There are no measures in relation to the policy of expelling illegal immigrants back to their country of origin. It simply defines a person who has entered the territory of the Union illegally as an illegal immigrant who has rights.

In reality, European institutions are embarrassed by this issue. On the one hand, in the name of security and justice, they are demanding a minimum of European rules to curb illegal immigration and, on the other, in the name of their rules that have become dogma – those of ultraliberalism and of freedom of movement –

they want the territory of the Union to become a place for receiving and attracting millions of prospective immigrants.

We reject this philosophy that is dangerous for the people and nations of Europe. We reassert their right to defend themselves and to remain themselves.

Adrian Manole (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) It is a known fact that policies on granting visas and strict immigration regulations have only ever been successful to a small degree in curbing illegal immigration. If anything, they have only helped the development of illegal immigrant trafficking networks.

The proposal to punish employers who use illegal citizens is timely. However, we must take care that it does not lose its effectiveness as the reasons why people migrate remain the same, regardless of whether penalties are introduced against the employers or not. Indeed, the controls being proposed will force immigrants without papers to choose even worse jobs, paying even lower salaries, especially in the current economic crisis.

It is obvious that these measures only offer a partial, incomplete solution to illegal immigration and black labour. EU Member States must start from now to follow a common, consistent policy on the issue of illegal immigration.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I support this report which will crackdown on employers of illegal immigrants within Europe. One of the factors encouraging illegal immigrants to enter the EU is the prospect of finding work. I support this legislation because it will create a fairer system for legitimate European workers.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) The prospect of finding work in Europe is attractive for third-country nationals for very understandable reasons. In times of crisis, however, we need to pay particular attention to who gets the ever scarcer jobs in order to prevent social discrepancies from arising as well. In my opinion, therefore, it is important to impose sanctions on employers who do not follow the rules. In these unsettled times, illegal labour cannot be tolerated, and we must start with those that are within reach locally and where sanctions will also have an effect. This report is thus an attempt to tackle this problem more forcefully, because the in-flow of migrant workers is not going to decrease, particularly during the crisis.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) Based on a simple view of this issue, there are two reasons why there are illegal immigrants: the precarious situation in the country of origin and labour market demand in other countries.

Whereas, in regard to the first problem, we have funds for development and cooperation programmes supported by the EU and which are obviously still not sufficient, in the case of the second matter, the problem has to date been dealt with in different ways at Member State level. However, standard provisions are needed at Community level for punishing employers as, in many cases, this is a transnational issue, involving human trafficking networks which exploit the vulnerability of illegal immigrants.

I am pleased that the issue of employers who benefit at the expense of illegal immigrants has been raised for discussion by the European Parliament. I am convinced that applying this directive will improve practical employment conditions within the Community.

Whereas until now, countries' policies have focused more on how to prevent illegal immigrants gaining access to the labour market, from now on, we are tackling the problem at its root.

At the same time, however, we must not interpret this report as meaning that the EU's borders are going to be closed. Far from it, we need to keep the labour market borders open, with the proviso that the flow of workers is legal and suited to the relevant state's needs.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, combating illegal immigration should, in my view, be a priority for the European Union.

I believe that it is necessary to re-establish legal conditions in the labour market as a matter of principle, whether in relation to European citizens or citizens from third countries who sometimes work without any minimum safety conditions at their workplace.

For this reason I voted in favour of Mr Fava's report providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals. I feel that these types of measures are in line with the desire to build a more transparent, fair and homogenous single European labour market.

I agree with the rapporteur that employers who exploit immigrants should be punished with financial, administrative and, in some cases, criminal penalties commensurate with the extent and the severity of the exploitation, and that Member States must monitor at-risk workplaces and introduce mechanisms to facilitate the reporting of cases of exploitation in the underground economy. We must remember that growth targets for unemployment and the economy in general can only be reached by encouraging total compliance with labour laws.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) We have chosen to vote in favour of the report on sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals.

The proposal aims to prevent the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals by employers and to strengthen the rights of workers. The person who is to be punished in the event of illegal employment is the employer who breaks the law, not the worker.

There is an absence of this type of legislation in certain countries within the EU. Other countries have legislation, but it is not implemented or observed. Common EU rules to prevent exploitation and the employment of illegally staying workers are therefore one way of raising the bar for many EU countries.

The proposal that we are voting on today has many shortcomings. If the decision had been ours, many parts of it would have been different. We would have liked to see greater protection for women involved in domestic work, for example. However, the alternative is to have no directive at all and therefore less protection for the four to eight million illegally staying third-country nationals who are currently working illegally within the EU and who, in their very vulnerable situation, are repeatedly exploited by employers.

While it is important to prevent illegal immigration and the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals, we must also ensure that we increase the opportunities for people to settle and seek work within the EU on a legal basis. This is regulated in other directives that we, in the European Parliament, have been involved in negotiating over the last year.

Anders Wijkman (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SV) We have chosen to vote in favour of the report on sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals.

The proposal aims to prevent the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals by employers and to strengthen the rights of workers. The person who is to be punished in the event of illegal employment is the employer who breaks the law, not the worker.

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The proposal that we are voting on today has many shortcomings. If the decision had been ours, many parts of it would have been different. We would have liked to see greater protection for women involved in domestic work, for example. However, the alternative is to have no directive at all and therefore less protection for the four to eight million illegally staying third-country nationals that are currently working illegally within the EU and who, in their very vulnerable situation, are repeatedly exploited by employers.

While it is important to prevent illegal immigration and the exploitation of illegally staying third-country nationals, we must also ensure that we increase the opportunities for people to settle and seek work within the EU on a legal basis. This is regulated in other directives that the European Parliament has been involved in negotiating over the last year.

- Report: Elisabeth Jeggle (A6-0472/2008)

Constantin Dumitriu (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) The report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning crop statistics comes with a number of supplementary elements required to improve the application of the new provisions.

Statistics play a vital role in drafting Community policies because they provide a precise picture of market supply and demand, and this information helps achieve an economic balance. At the same time, standard regulations at European level must not become a bureaucratic burden but ensure that there is a constant exchange of information between Member States in a simple, effective manner.

For this reason, I welcome the Commission's proposal and the additions proposed by the rapporteur as they provide a new phase in the creation of a simple, flexible legal framework which complies with EU principles.

The impact of these regulations on European agriculture will establish a greater capacity to respond to the problems which can crop up in the market, such as overproduction, which can lead to falling prices.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) I have voted in favour of this report, partly because the Commission's proposal aims to simplify the current legislation and partly because agricultural statistics are nevertheless necessary in the present circumstances, with the common agricultural policy.

I would like to stress that my 'yes' vote for this report is not an expression of support for the common agricultural policy itself.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome Mrs Jeggle's work and I voted in favour of her report on the need to compile crop statistics.

I share the opinion of the rapporteur and the Commission that statistics on crops are essential for the evaluation of the common agricultural policy and the management of EU markets in these goods.

I am pleased that Mrs Jeggle has emphasised that additional costs and burdens should remain within reasonable limits, so that the benefits of simplified bureaucracy and better quality legislation are not offset by overly high costs associated with the proposed measures.

I believe that the report fits perfectly with the action programme for reducing administrative burdens in the European Union set out in the Communication of 24 January 2007 and, as I said, it therefore has my support.

- Report: József Szájer (A6-0216/2008)

Constantin Dumitriu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) As I have already stated when I expressed my support for the report on promoting agricultural products on the Community market and in third countries, wine is one of the Community's products which enjoys a dominant position on the global market and must assume a key role in Europe's commercial strategy.

In order to provide better support for the different types of wines, not only traditional types but also those referred to in the present report, we need however simple, flexible regulations which comply with European principles for promoting quality. At the same time, we need better cooperation between Member States, European institutions, producers, as well as producer and distributor organisations.

I welcome the European Commission's proposal and the report presented by our fellow Member, József Szájer, as we will therefore have standard, simplified rules on the definition, description and presentation of aromatised wines, aromatised wine-based drinks and aromatised wine-product cocktails. These products are renowned worldwide and, thanks to the new provisions, we will successfully achieve a better position on the market for them, while supporting Community producers and distributors.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of Mr Szájer's report on aromatised wines, aromatised wine-based drinks and aromatised wine-product cocktails.

I believe that the wine industry is very important for the EU economy, since a number of countries, including Italy, France and Spain, rank among the world's leading wine producers and export their celebrated products all over the world. I therefore welcome the proposal to lay down clear rules for the definition of the aforesaid categories of wine-based products, so that the high quality of European produce may always be recognised and identified.

- Report: van den Burg (A6-0047/2009)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We Social Democrats in the European Parliament have chosen to vote in favour of the proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC as regards reduced rates of value added tax. However, we would like to stress that we do not consider reduced rates of value added tax to be a solution to the problem of a 'black' economy.

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – Today we voted on the report on reduced rates of VAT. These amendments highlight that reduced VAT rates would have a positive impact in reshaping many service sectors as they would reduce the level of undeclared work.

With regard to the housing sector, it is possible to apply reduced VAT rates to renovation and repair work aimed at increased energy savings and efficiency.

The proposal goes back to the summer of 2008 and proposes the addition of certain other locally supplied services, including restaurant services.

In addition to housing and restaurant catering services, labour-intensive services will be permanently included in the list of services eligible for reduced rates. The category is broadened to include other locally supplied services of similar nature such as: minor repairs of tangible movable goods, including bikes, shoes, clothes, computers, watches; cleaning and maintenance services for all these goods; domestic care services; all personal care services, including hairdressing, beauty services, gardening services; renovation and maintenance services provided for places of worship and cultural heritage and historical monuments.

Also, the category of pharmaceutical products is widened to cover all absorbent hygiene products, particularly children's nappies and medical equipment for the disabled.

Printed books, including audio-books, under current legislation may also be subject to reduced rates.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The fostering of small- and medium-sized enterprises – which comprise 99% of Europe's companies, which are responsible for more than 100 million jobs and which, in the last eight years alone, have created 8 million jobs – is central to the Small Business Act.

The current proposal exemplifies the measures taken. It allows certain companies to benefit from a reduced rate of VAT, while at the same time trying to tackle the underground labour market and call for the creation of legitimate companies.

While keen to facilitate the operation of SMEs, we must not jeopardise the fundamental principles of the EU. In this case, the single market is protected as the rules in this document will apply to companies which operate only locally, thus avoiding market distortions.

For all these reasons I voted in favour of this report, which I regard as a perfect example of the policies to be adopted by the European Parliament in the economic field.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) For the first time I am happy to vote for a European directive on taxation. For a while, until there is a more general revision which could call everything into question, the most glaring aberrations in this directive will disappear. Locally supplied services, such as restaurants, which in any case do not have anything to do with the problems of the internal market and distortion of competition, and labour-intensive services will be able to benefit from a reduced rate.

The ball is now in the governments' court. First of all in the Council, which has not yet made its decision. Then at national level, where we are watching carefully the manner and speed with which our people in power will keep their electoral promises.

I am afraid, however, that this good news may have its roots in the crisis; the fall in the spending power of Europeans and especially the imminence of the European elections. The proper solution would have been to bring an end once and for all to tax harmonisation, for which there is still no justification.

David Martin (PSE), in writing. – I voted in favour of this report which will allow Britain to reduce VAT rates for a new category of goods and services including restaurant services and other local services. I support the report because it gives smaller companies the opportunity to attract better custom. The report represents positive action in combating the recession by making smaller, local companies more attractive to customers.

John Purvis (PPE-DE), in writing. – Conservatives have always argued that taxation is a fundamental issue of sovereignty and therefore any move to transfer powers in this area from the European Union to the Member States is to be welcomed. This measure, which allows Member States to apply a lower rate of VAT to a number of locally provided and labour intensive services, is a positive example of the application of the principle of subsidiarity, and we encourage the Commission to move further in this direction. In particular, we would have liked the reduced rate to have been extended to locally produced beers and ciders, as this would help pubs to survive when they are suffering from high levels of duty.

We stress that it is for Member States to decide when it is appropriate to apply these measures. The recent reduction of the general rate of VAT in the United Kingdom has been an expensive exercise which has produced little effect, when other measures such as much bigger but targeted reductions in VAT, as permitted by this proposal, or increased personal income tax allowances, would have been more beneficial both to individuals and to the economy as a whole.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (PSE), *in writing*. – (DA) The Danish Social Democratic Members of the European Parliament, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Britta Thomsen, Christel Schaldemose, Dan Jørgensen and Ole Christensen, have abstained from the vote on Mrs van den Burg's report on reduced rates of value added tax. It is the view of our delegation that a reduction in VAT in Denmark would have an extremely modest effect on employment combined with a problematic loss of revenue for the state. In view of the current economic crisis, there may, however, be more of a need in other EU Member States to utilise the instrument of VAT as one element of their national crisis packages and thus strengthen employment in sectors that have been badly affected. We already have very different rates of VAT, and therefore we do not want to prevent other EU Member States from taking this path. It could also have a positive effect on demand in the Danish economy.

Peter Skinner (PSE), *in writing*. – The European Parliamentary Labour Party voted in favour of this report. We consider that VAT reduction can make a contribution to the maintenance of certain jobs and allow for the creation of others. Each country has submitted experiences which have allowed for some belief in the fact that local conditions need local reactions; this is true of a tax such as VAT.

In the UK a general reduction in VAT has led to a fall in inflation of 1% and an injection into the economy of GBP 12 billion.

- Motion for a resolution B6-0097/2009: Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners

Martin Callanan (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – Since 11 September 2001, America has led a global war on terror. Sadly, the absolutist culture of human rights in the EU and the political cowardice of many of its senior politicians have obliged the United States to assume a grossly disproportionate responsibility for tackling a threat that knows no boundaries.

Islamist jihadi extremists pose a threat to our very way of life. Politicians have a responsibility to protect the public against this unprecedented and existentialist danger. I am glad that some countries in the EU saw fit to cooperate with the CIA, our American allies. I cannot understand why some countries put the human rights of terrorists over the protection of their own citizens and refused to cooperate with the CIA. Once again the anti-Americanism so prevalent in the EU put its citizens' safety in jeopardy.

This whole issue shows the importance of each Member State retaining the right to act independently in matters of foreign policy and intelligence.

I voted against this report.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) In 2007, as a result of the investigation conducted by the Committee which presided over this issue, the European Parliament adopted a resolution which contained dozens of recommendations aimed at preventing a repetition of these illegal activities.

It is now engaged in a process of assessing the application of those recommendations, using a methodology which I proposed. The President of the European Parliament recently sent a formal request for cooperation to the presidents of the national parliaments and a hearing will be held shortly.

Adopting a new resolution before this process is completed would be rash and would lead to mistakes: the mistake of speaking too soon when there is nothing new to say; the mistake of yielding to the desire to adopt a resolution in order to affect people or make domestic policy; and the mistake of starting off by criticising President Obama when we should be working to boost transatlantic cooperation by taking advantage of the change in the US administration.

I therefore cannot vote in favour of this motion for a resolution. I also cannot vote against a text which reiterates basic values of respect for human rights, the rule of law and the search for truth. That is why I will abstain.

Jas Gawronski (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, my decision to vote against the motion for a resolution was based on the fact that it reiterates the same ideas that my group opposed in the final vote of the temporary committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners (TDIP). I give this opinion as coordinator of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats for the former TDIP temporary committee and for the subsequent working group within the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

The aforesaid committee decided to send a questionnaire to each Member State in order to clarify what developments had taken place following the European Parliament's investigation. To date however, as you are well aware, no response has been received to these questionnaires, even after written reminders were sent.

I do not therefore think it wise to adopt a new text claiming to make new conclusions when in reality we have nothing new to make public. I have the feeling this is yet another electoral stunt by the Left, rather than an attempt to see justice.

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE), in writing. – I did vote for keeping the reference to Portugal, including the reference to the responsibilities of the Barroso Government, despite the fact that I think that the text of that paragraph could be more accurate and mention 'new factual information' and not just 'press information'.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Without playing down important aspects with which we clearly disagree, not to mention its flagrant omissions and contradictions, this resolution:

- 'denounces the lack of action taken so far ... to shed light on the extraordinary renditions programme';
- 'calls on the Member States, the Commission and the Council ... to assist in ascertaining the truth by opening inquiries or collaborating with the competent bodies, ... and by ensuring effective parliamentary scrutiny of the action of secret services';
- 'calls on the European Union, the Member States and the US authorities to investigate and fully clarify the abuses and violations of international and national law on human rights, fundamental freedoms, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and the right to a fair trial committed in connection with the "war against terror", so as to establish responsibility ... and to ensure that such violations will not recur in the future'.

However, the resolution does not demystify or denounce the fundamental element, namely the so-called 'fight against terror', nor does it condemn what it terms the 'limited maintenance of rendition schemes and of secret detention facilities' by the US.

We need clear condemnation and a search for the truth, as in fact the Portuguese Communist Party proposed in the Portuguese Parliament and as the Portuguese Socialist, Social Democrat and Popular Parties rejected.

Jens Holm and Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), in writing. – Even though there are contentious elements in the CIA resolution, like welcoming the EU-US agreements on judicial cooperation and extradition, I still voted in favour of the resolution to support human rights and the attempt to shed light on the extraordinary renditions programme.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The resolution adopted by this House reaffirms that, according to Article 14 of the UN Convention against Torture, any victim of an act of torture has an enforceable right to redress and to fair and adequate compensation. It is telling that the UK Conservative Members of this House voted against the resolution. It is equally telling that the UK Labour Members abstained. The morally bankrupt Labour Government has led the UK into an illegal war and has allowed its airports to be used for extraordinary rendition flights. The votes of the Unionist MEPs today adds further to this shame.

Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL), in writing. – Even though there are elements in the CIA resolution such as welcoming the EU-US agreements on judicial cooperation and extradition which I am very critical of, I still voted in favour of the resolution, to support human rights and the attempt to shed light on the extraordinary renditions programme.

Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) I have previously expressed my disgust with regard to the information that has come to light in respect of the treatment of people who are suspected, but not convicted, of crimes and who have been extradited and in some cases kidnapped by the authorities of various states. This is totally unacceptable and contravenes the principles of modern democracy. This matter has still not been cleared up and therefore it is good that these incidents are being brought to light.

Parliament's resolution contains many positive elements, but I believe that the inclusion of irrelevant wordings makes its foreign policy ambitions far too high. This shifts the focus from the main issue, which is that of the suspected violations of human rights. That is very unfortunate. I have therefore voted against this motion for a resolution.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted against the motion for a resolution on the alleged CIA activities involving the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners in some European countries as the purpose of this resolution is unfounded.

Firstly, I would like to emphasise that, from a procedural perspective, the political groups which signed this resolution ought to have waited for the replies from the national parliaments to the letter from President Pötering dated 9 February 2009, which requested details of the measures taken by Member States following the February 2007 resolution on this matter.

Secondly, it is completely unproductive getting ourselves bogged down again in suspicions and accusations against certain Member States, brought about by the executive order passed by President Obama in January 2009, requesting the closure of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre within one year.

As regards Romania, Commissioner Barrot mentioned in his speech during the last part-session that he closely monitored the measures which the Romanian authorities took during this investigation. I believe that Romania has entirely demonstrated good will in its cooperation and has supplied the Commission and European Parliament with all the necessary information, as well as with all the results of the investigations carried out on this matter.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I would also like this time, as on the occasion of the Strasbourg part-session held from 2 to 5 February, to reaffirm my opposition to the resolution on the alleged CIA activities involving the transportation and illegal detention of alleged terrorists on the territory of certain European countries.

The accusations levelled against Romania, according to which it had been involved in the terrorist suspect transfer programme, are unfounded. It is therefore unacceptable for Romania's name to be freely bandied about as part of the discussion on alleged CIA prisons.

So far, only accusations have been levelled at us without any credible proof to back them up. Indeed, the Martin report is the best example of this approach as the accusations it makes against Romania are both controversial and unfounded.

I think that the reasoning behind a number of such serious accusations is part of the same commitment assumed by European governments to respect and promote the fundamental freedoms, rights and values of the European Union on behalf of which the draft resolution has been initiated.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I intend to use my vote to support the motion for a resolution on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners. I believe it is extremely important to implement in full the recommendations made by this Parliament in the report by the temporary committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners because the existence of secret detention centres, enforced disappearances and the torture of detainees are not only a flagrant violation of international human rights law, the UN Convention on Torture, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights but also cannot be tolerated in an international system governed by democracy and the rule of law.

For this reason I welcome the resolution, which urges all Member States to bring to light the abuse committed in this context in the name of the war on terror, since a genuine and effective war on terror cannot be fought by breaching the very same human rights and fundamental freedoms it is supposed to defend.

Brian Simpson (PSE), in writing. – EPLP MEPs believe that this resolution contains a number of points of merit. We have consistently supported the drafting of this resolution and approved the joint resolution as tabled on behalf of four European Parliamentary groups.

However, we cannot support this Resolution if it includes unproven accusations which have not yet been judged by the relevant authorities. Unfortunately, as amended, this resolution is no longer based on proven facts and the EPLP regretfully has no option but to abstain.

Marek Siwiec (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I refrained from voting, owing to the fact that I am unfamiliar with the details of the amendments to the said motion for a resolution.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), in writing. – Even though there are contentious elements in the CIA resolution, like welcoming the EU-US agreements on judicial cooperation and extradition, I still voted in

favour of the resolution to support human rights and the attempt to shed light on the extraordinary renditions programme.

- Report: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (A6-0019/2009)

Adam Bielan (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, I supported Mr Saryusz-Wolski's report. I am pleased that the report focuses primarily of the events of 2008, which put the effectiveness of the EU's foreign policy to the test. Once again, we have ascertained that Europe's strength lies in concerted action. The same applies to European institutions. They must work together, in the same way as the Member States do, in order for Europe to speak with one voice on the international stage.

Martin Callanan (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I support the retention of the national veto in matters of foreign affairs and I am increasingly concerned about the growing role of the EU on the world stage despite the fact that the Lisbon treaty has not been ratified.

Nevertheless, I accept that there are some areas in which the Union can act together to express its will, and one such area is Taiwan. The council recently voiced its support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations. I support this policy because I think it is unacceptable to deny the 23 million people of Taiwan a voice on the international stage.

Taiwan is a prosperous democracy with a top-quality public health system. I question the morality of excluding Taiwan from the benefits that would undoubtedly accrue from being granted observer status at the World Health Assembly. Furthermore, I hope the EU institutions can together make progress on this issue before the next WHA meeting in May.

I welcome the report's positive comments about the improvement in cross-strait relations.

I therefore voted to abstain on this report.

Călin Cătălin Chiriță (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I would like to congratulate the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr Saryusz-Wolski, for the excellent report he presented. I feel that we must focus particular attention on the Eastern Partnership. In my view, the Eastern Partnership must have a clear institutional structure, with parliamentary and intergovernmental dimensions, as well as adequate technical and financial bodies.

As regards the intergovernmental dimension, I feel that we need to establish a clear timetable of meetings at ministerial level involving the 27 Member States with their counterparts from the Eastern Partnership countries. Obviously, in the case of Belarus, the EU Council's decision to resume negotiations with both the government in Minsk and with all the democratic forces in this country must be supported. Belarus's authoritarian regime must understand that the EU stipulates as a firm condition of any cooperation the need to respect democratic principles and human rights.

I feel that the Eastern Partnership's parliamentary dimension is important because it ensures this project's democratic legitimacy. The meetings of the future parliamentary assembly must contribute to the adoption of this project, both by the parties in power and the opposition forces which may offer an alternative government, based on democratic logic.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The group of the Communist Party of Greece in the European Parliament voted against the annual report on the application of the EU common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in 2007.

The report insultingly calls for the international political and military presence of the EU – in other words its imperialist interventions throughout the world – to be strengthened. It uses problems generated by capitalist development, such as climate change and energy questions, as new pretexts for its imperialist interventionism and to improve its position over its global imperialist competitors.

At the same time, it seeks closer and deeper cooperation with the USA, with a view to taking a joint approach to grassroots reactions and resistance to their imperialist rule.

The report defends the EU's imperialist action in various areas of the world, such as the Western Balkans, where it has already established the EULEX police/judicial force in Kosovo, the Middle East as a whole, Georgia, Africa and elsewhere, and is looking to become even stronger.

Year on year, the EU is becoming more aggressive to and dangerous for the people, who must fight a more decisive and coordinated fight to overturn this policy, together with the US and NATO policy and the imperialist order of things overall.

Jas Gawronski (PPE-DE), in writing. – This report criticises the human rights situation in China, but it might also have mentioned the human rights situation in Taiwan, which is exemplary. Taiwan's prosperous democracy, strengthened by constitutional protections and the rule of law, stands in stark contrast to the totalitarian communist dictatorship in China

I echo the report's words about the improvement in cross-straits relations. President Ma Ying-jeou is to be congratulated for bringing this about.

The CFSP is inevitably limited in scope while it remains subject to national veto. Nevertheless, I welcome the Council's recent expression of support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations. I hope the Council and the other institutions will endorse Taiwan's ambition to be admitted as an observer to the World Health Assembly. It is morally wrong for Taiwan to be excluded from a public health forum simply as a result of pressure from China.

I therefore voted to approve this report.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Just like two others debated and adopted in this sitting, this report is also very ambitious.

Leaving aside the rhetoric, the report believes that 'the coming months will provide a unique opportunity for the EU to work out a new transatlantic agenda with the new US administration, covering strategic issues of common concern, such as new ... global governance', particularly bearing in mind the forthcoming NATO summit and G20 meeting, both planned for April.

As a matter of fact, the report and the resolution constitute an outline of the objectives, priorities and interests of the EU's major powers, whether in the Balkans (Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina), Eastern Europe (Caucasus, Black Sea, Belarus, Georgia, Russia), Middle East (Gaza Strip, Iraq), Mediterranean, Central Asia (Afghanistan, Iran), Africa (Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo), Asia (China) or Latin America.

Its content ranges from the most blatant violations of international law, interference and interventionism to poorly concealed ambitions of political and economic control by the EU's major powers.

That is the real content and meaning of the 'EU's role in the world' that has been announced: in other words, its ambition to share control of areas of influence, markets and natural resources with the US and Japan.

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) I gave Mr Jacek Sarysz-Wolski's report, on the main features of the common foreign and security policy, my unequivocal support. The Council's report for 2007 provides a fitting description of these issues. It would be difficult not to agree that the financial resources earmarked for implementing the CFSP are far from sufficient, particularly in circumstances involving aggressive terrorist activity. The right to live in peace and with a sense of security is an EU priority. That security has multiple dimensions: political, military, energy, food, and so on. Cooperation with other countries plays an enormous role in this field. The particular importance of transatlantic relations with the USA and Canada should be acknowledged, as should the closer cooperation between the EU and NATO. The Eastern Partnership may be acknowledged as very promising. In this regard, relations with Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus are worthy of note. The EU can also exert a positive influence on the situation in the Middle East. The recent conflict in the Gaza Strip has demonstrated the dramatic circumstances in which the people of that region live, be they Palestinian or Jewish.

In the field of security, the EU's actions will only be effective if we speak and act as one. Focusing on individual interests can only bring temporary benefits. Moreover, universal solidarity requires particular respect for fundamental values and human rights, as well as the dignity and freedom to which every individual is entitled. The role that suitable diplomatic efforts, including the use of so-called preventive diplomacy, can play in this field is by no means a minor one.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) As apparent from the debate and the report on the common foreign and security policy, the European Union's ambition in terms of foreign policy is huge. It is clearly apparent from the facts that the EU's role in the world does not match up to this ambition. However, not only is its role growing, but in the vast majority of cases the Member States are in agreement and act in cooperation.

The sharing of values, principles and priorities between the 27 Member States of the European Union is much more widespread than may be suggested by the times of disagreement. This is exactly as to be expected.

That is why I support strengthening the agreement on which our priorities and criteria for action are based.

The recognition, however, that there are disagreements which basically stem from the existence of different interests and priorities does not lead me to conclude that the EU is irrelevant in the world or that a single foreign policy needs to be imposed on all the Member States, contrary to their own interests or even their own history. A community is being built and this process, albeit slow, has more chance of succeeding than the desire to impose a single approach, which is not essential.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the motion for a European Parliament resolution on the 'Annual report from the Council to the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in 2007, presented to the European Parliament in application of point G, paragraph 43 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006' in order to support peace, human dignity, human rights, democracy, multilateralism and the rule of law.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), in writing. – The Saryusz-Wolski report contains some welcome references to Taiwan, and in particular the recent thaw in cross-strait relations. I congratulate Taiwanese President Ma for his courageous and determined initiative to improve relations with the People's Republic of China.

Nevertheless, I fear we in the EU do not fully appreciate the importance of supporting democratic Taiwan and giving its 23 million people a voice on the international stage.

The Council supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations. It is time Parliament reiterated this support, especially with regard to Taiwan's ambition to become an observer in the World Health Assembly.

Taiwan's exclusion from this body at the behest of China is reprehensible. As a medical doctor, I deprecate the interference of politics in matters of public health. We stand up to China over Tibet; we stand up to China over human rights; it is time we stood up to China over Taiwan.

I voted to abstain on this report.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), in writing. – I and my British Conservative colleagues welcome the need for effective inter-governmental co-operation within the CFSP, provided the United Kingdom retains its veto and ability to act alone in its national interest when required. The report has good things to say on the need for more co-operation internationally by the 27 EU Member States in areas such as transatlantic relations, Georgia, the Eastern Partnership and the broader Middle East.

However, we oppose the minor references to the Treaty of Lisbon. We have long expressed our opposition to the Treaty and do not believe that it would be in the interests of the UK and the EU to have the new foreign policy tools provided for in the Treaty. For these reasons, we abstained overall.

- Report: Karl von Wogau (A6-0032/2009)

Adam Bielan (UEN), in writing. – (PL) Mr President, I supported Mr von Wogau's report. I am firmly in favour of strengthening the ESDP. Expanding the scope of cooperation between the European armed forces is, as the report emphasises, an essential step towards establishing a common foreign and defence policy. I also concur with the notion that the European Union should assure not only its own security, but also that of its neighbours. Our neighbours' seemingly bilateral conflicts have a direct impact on the EU.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The report on updating the European Security Strategy openly supports even greater militarisation of the EU in order to strengthen its military capabilities for its imperialist interventions.

It welcomes the Council's objective of the EU's acquiring a permanent military force of 60 000 men built up around the Franco-German Eurocorps armed forces which already exist, equipped with common weapons systems and ready to fight in 'rapid response actions' in various areas of the world simultaneously. The pretexts for EU intervention, the so-called 'threats' against its security, are constantly expanding, including sectors, in addition to 'terrorism', such as climate change, energy security, cyberspace, regional clashes, maritime transport and even space. In fact, the EU is reserving the 'right' of military intervention where and when it deems necessary for its imperialist interests and, more to the point, not only against third countries

and peoples, but also against the peoples of its Member States, in order to defend the power of the monopolies as and when necessary.

That is why the Communist Party of Greece voted against the report. Only grassroots disobedience and a break with the imperialist and anti-grassroots policy of the EU and its overall construct can pave the way for a Europe of peace and grassroots prosperity.

Glyn Ford (PSE), *in writing*. – Mr von Wogau has my congratulations on his work both here and more generally for his chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. I support the idea of an EU Operational Military Headquarters being established. Of course NATO should be and is our first port of call when security is threatened. Yet during the Bush-Gore debates just over a decade ago, George Bush said that had he been President he would not have intervened in Kosovo.

Now despite my antipathy to the Bush Administration's foreign policy it seems to me that it is a perfectly reasonable position for Bush to take on the basis of US self-interest. Yet it is not a position that Europe could or should have followed. Apart from the strong moral argument that we had a responsibility to protect those facing the genocide of the Serbs, we also had the consequences of tens/hundreds of thousands of refugees. We, in our own and their interests, must have the capacity to engage without the Americans. To do this, it is a small price we pay to have a permanent EU Operational Military HQ ready for such a future eventuality.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Like the report on 'the role of NATO in the security architecture of the EU', this report (and resolution) reasserts the objective of affirming and consolidating the EU as a political and military bloc with an offensive nature, in partnership with the US and within the framework of NATO.

Among other important and enlightening aspects, this report and resolution reasserts the offensive and global concept of NATO, considering that 'the updated ESS [European Security Strategy] and the future NATO Strategic Concept should be mutually coherent and that this should be reflected in the Declaration which will be adopted by the NATO summit in Strasbourg/Kehl in April 2009'. It actually goes even further as it 'calls for the setting-up of an ... EU Operational Headquarters'.

In the end, the report and resolution constitute a real denunciation, not that this was its intention, of the militarisation of the EU and of the so-called 'Treaty of Lisbon' which institutionalises this militarisation.

Those in Ireland who denounced and therefore rejected the militaristic nature of this proposed Treaty, the ratification of which would mean further militarisation of international relations, a continued arms race, and more interference and war, are right.

Those in Portugal, like the Portuguese Communist Party, who, in rejecting this Treaty, have demanded that a referendum and wide national debate should be held on its extremely serious consequences for Portugal, Europe and the world, and for peace, are right.

Richard Howitt (PSE), *in writing*. – British Labour MEPs joined with the Socialist Group in voting in favour of this report. Labour MEPs voted against the section of text devoted to the creation of a permanent EU Military Operational Headquarters. Labour MEPs have consistently questioned the need for this type of new institutional structure. We believe that Europe needs to focus on ensuring it has the right capabilities to deploy at the right time, and making sure existing institutions function effectively rather than building additional institutions as an expensive and unnecessary luxury.

David Martin (PSE), *in writing*. – This report calls for the setting-up of an autonomous and permanent EU Operational Headquarters with the capacity to undertake strategic planning and to conduct European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operations and missions. The report is right to recommend the reform of the United Nations Organization in order to make it capable of fully meeting its responsibilities and acting effectively in providing solutions to global challenges and responding to key threats.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I welcome the report on the ESS and ESDP which contains some relevant, useful points for defining the European Union's future policies as a global player.

I would like to mention at this point the need to coordinate the European Union's security dimension with NATO's to prevent any duplication of effort and waste of resources. In this context, I welcome the Council's initiative to set up an informal EU-NATO high-level group.

Furthermore, relations with Russia must be reassessed in light of the recent events in this area. In order to promote stability among its eastern neighbours and minimise the impact on Member States, the EU must adopt a tough policy towards Russia, which should be drafted in close cooperation with transatlantic partners and include the relevant multilateral organisations, as well as the OSCE. This objective is also closely linked to the absolute necessity to make the provision of energy secure in Europe, which can only be achieved if we join forces through specific projects involving diversification of energy resources.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Looking around Europe it is clear that, in terms of security, the European Union has, and must have, its own strategic concerns and priorities. This is dictated by the geography, and also by the geopolitics. Saying this does not in any way correspond to an idea of security or a concern for defence conceived as an alternative to our alliances, not least our alliance with the United States. Saying this does, however, correspond to an idea of European responsibility. If we want security, then we must be ready to bear the burdens that this brings, whether physical or human. It also necessitates an agreement on what is common and what can be shared in this concern for security and among these burdens. Security has a price, and the demand for greater multilateralism on our allies' part imposes an added cost. The next period will be demanding in this respect. Europeans cannot demand more security without paying for it.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the motion for a European Parliament resolution on the 'European Security Strategy and ESDP' as I feel that the European Union needs to develop strategic autonomy by means of a powerful and effective security and defence policy. I also think that the European Union must be able to guarantee its own security, as well as that of neighbouring countries.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), in writing. – The Conservative Delegation fundamentally opposes the EU involvement in defence which this report aims significantly to extend.

ESDP is a political project that contributes no additional military capability while at the same time duplicating and undermining NATO. The report envisions further unacceptable transfer of national competence in defence and security to the EU. It proposes 'integrated European Armed Forces' and 'Synchronised Armed Forces Europe' as an EU army in embryo. It is also replete with positive references to the Treaty of Lisbon, which we have strenuously opposed. We therefore voted against the Report.

- Report: Ari Vatanen (A6-0033/2009)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We have chosen to vote against this own-initiative report in its entirety, as we believe it to be superfluous. Some parts of the report are poor and do not contribute to furthering the European security policy debate.

Guy Bono (PSE), in writing. – (FR) I voted against this report, presented by the French Christian Democrat, Mr Vatanen.

The text of this report relates to the role of NATO in the security architecture of the European Union. It is an important issue that needs to be considered. In my opinion, however, the answers given in this report were not good ones and they left the root of the problem unresolved.

By my vote, I certainly did not wish to deny the role that Europe has to play internationally. As an economic and demographic power, it is expected to act according to its values and must do so in order to maintain peace and intercultural dialogue. Strengthening the European Union's military credibility is, however, indispensable. That is why I am emphasising my commitment to creating a European security and defence policy that has real autonomy.

In my opinion, this is not what Mr Vatanen's report promises. Some stumbling blocks remain, in particular concerning denuclearisation and relations with Russia. The number of amendments tabled proves it (265): the text of the report was far from achieving unanimous approval. It does not address the main concern which is to ensure that Europe has a strong defence and cooperates with NATO, but is not subservient to it.

Alin Lucian Antochi (PSE), in writing. – (RO) In the area of security and defence, the actions carried out by the European Union as a global player have taken the form of intervention to prevent conflict, thereby giving it the status of the main promoter of peace in the world. While, at the end of the Cold War, there were questions raised about NATO's role, the new threats to security and progress noted by Europeans in the area of defence and the implementation of civil-military operations in different parts of the world highlight the need for a new arrangement for EU-NATO cooperation.

In the present context, the lack of any common European foreign policy and discrepancies between Member States in the area of funding and military technological capacity make NATO a vital partner for managing military crises.

Adopting a division of labour whereby ESDP supports civil operations and NATO ensures the rapid deployment of numerous military forces should guarantee that both organisations complement and not compete with each other. Consequently, the rapporteur's suggestion to create an EU operational headquarters could serve precisely this objective by complementing the current NATO command structures in the area of joint civil and military operations.

In addition, we must also take into account in future EU-NATO relations the situation of states in Eastern Europe. With this in mind, it is important to promote an open-door policy and support a constructive dialogue with Russia aimed at establishing collective security in this part of Europe.

Martin Callanan (PPE-DE), in writing. – One of the EU's more spurious claims of self-justification is that it has maintained peace in Europe since 1945. In fact, NATO is largely responsible for keeping the peace in Europe since the Second World War.

There is a strong anti-American lobby in the European Parliament. That is to be greatly regretted, because America's selfless contribution to rescuing Europe in the 1940s and keeping peace in Europe ever since is often obscured by anti-US propaganda. America's part in our collective security is, and will remain, vital.

Of course, there are crossovers regarding the work of NATO and the EU, but they are two fundamentally different organisations. Any effort by the EU to usurp NATO's primacy and responsibility for transatlantic security is to be strongly resisted.

I therefore elected to abstain.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) The report literally paints what is black white and insultingly extols the so-called 'peaceful' and 'democratic' nature and role both of NATO and the EU, which are guilty of so many crimes against humanity, and presents them as common guardians of peace and human rights in Europe. It insultingly and with no trace of seriousness goes as far as maintaining that the citizens allegedly decide and the NATO army executes. It calls on the EU to claim an enhanced role in its transatlantic cooperation with the USA and NATO, in order to promote the particular interests of European capital.

In this direction, it urges greater cooperation in 'crisis management', such as in Afghanistan and Kosovo, better exchange of information between the two imperialist organisations and so on.

It welcomes the French initiative of a return to the military structures of NATO, at the same time calling for NATO and the EU to expand, and inadmissibly demands that Cyprus join the NATO 'Partnership for Peace'.

The Communist Party of Greece voted against the report. It condemns the imperialist, criminal nature of NATO and the EU and emphasises the urgent need for the grassroots fight to be stepped up, in order to get our country out of the imperialist organisations and unions, and the need to fight to break them up and overturn the barbaric imperialist order of things.

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE), in writing. – I declare that I voted in favour in the final vote on the Vatanen report on the role of NATO in the security architecture of the EU.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) Here we have a European Parliament report and resolution which, despite containing certain mystifying elements, are essential reading.

It is a text which makes explicit – if any doubt existed – one of the objectives and central themes of the EU and its proposed Treaty of Lisbon: the militarisation of the EU and its consolidation as a political and military bloc, within the framework of NATO; that is, in partnership (coordination and rivalry) with the US.

As it is impossible to comment, in this short explanation of vote, on the whole content of this report and resolution, I would stress that these consider that the time has come for the major capitalist powers of the EU to assert themselves. As a result, they look 'forward to the opportunities afforded by NATO's forthcoming 60th anniversary summit in Strasbourg and Kehl for the rejuvenation of the Alliance and the strengthening of its relations with the European Union', to which the recent Munich Security Conference was the prologue.

In this context they strongly welcome 'the French initiative of a formal return to the military structures of NATO, and the efforts by the French Presidency within the EU Council to bring the EU and NATO further together in response to the new security challenges'.

Here is a report and resolution in step with the imperialist ambitions of the EU's major powers.

Richard Howitt (PSE), in writing. – British Labour MEPs are supportive of positive cooperation between NATO and the EU, and welcome sharing of experience and expertise as a key method for strengthening basic capabilities, improving interoperability and coordinating planning, equipment and training. We voted in favour of the original text in paragraph 22 as we welcome French participation as part of strengthening EU-NATO cooperation.

On the final vote, British Labour MEPs joined with the Socialist Group in voting against this report, particularly due to the inclusion of an entire section devoted to the creation of a permanent EU Military Operational Headquarters. Labour MEPs have consistently questioned the need for this type of new institutional structure. We believe that Europe needs to focus on ensuring it has the right capabilities to deploy at the right time, and making sure existing institutions function effectively rather than building additional institutions as an expensive and unnecessary luxury.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I could not support the Vatanen report on the role of NATO in the security of the EU. The report states that NATO forms the core of European security. I take a contrary view. I believe that Europe's security is enhanced by the EU's common foreign and security policy. NATO, however, remains a nuclear weapons-based alliance. I am totally opposed to nuclear weapons and my party is committed to removing nuclear weapons from Scottish soil when we achieve independence. An independent Scotland will not remain in NATO whilst it remains a nuclear alliance.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) NATO played an important role during the Cold War between 1949 and 1989. Its official task was to defend the Member States' common territory against foreign invasions, without taking action outside of that territory. The justification was the defence of a pluriform democracy against dictatorships, but in practice it was mainly about protecting a capitalist economy from a socialist economy. The right-wing dictatorships in Portugal and Greece were allowed to join in, there were bilateral agreements with a similar dictatorship in Spain, and the French colony of Algeria was forced to belong to NATO territory until 1962. When the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact disappeared, this NATO lost its *raison d'être*. Its continued existence is a problem for the EU, because six Member States have opted for military neutrality. The current NATO is still more of a 'coalition of the willing' around the USA than an extension of the EU. This year, just as NATO is turning 60, it will have to be apparent what future role NATO will claim. If it is that of the world's policeman, carrying out its own projects independently of the United Nations with a view to benefiting the economically most powerful states, this organisation will prove harmful and superfluous. That is why I will be voting 'no'.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I welcome the Vatanen report as a realistic appraisal of European security. Although we would like to draw up a European security policy capable of meeting the security needs of all EU members, we must accept that a security structure already exists which acts as the centre of gravity of the majority of EU Member States' defence. I am talking about NATO.

However, I would like to emphasise the importance of using the comparative benefits of the two organisations in order to draw up a solid humanitarian intervention policy. No matter what terms are used to formulate the European Security Strategy, the EU 'mosaic' will allow us to intervene in complex areas where diplomacy or limited intervention are only possible thanks to the EU's unrivalled capacity for subtlety. By the same token, we have in NATO a solid alliance, with tried-and-tested mechanisms, which we Europeans must not stop resorting to in order to reduce the suffering which some conflicting forces are causing with impunity. A first step towards this consolidation may be an operational headquarters for the European Union.

Irrespective of the specific policies which will guide our external actions, we welcome close transatlantic cooperation as the most practical solution to these challenges and as an embodiment of our community of values.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The location of Europe dictates its security priorities and concerns. However, the integration of Europe and the 27 Member States within a set of values and a model of society which, in a broad sense, we call the western world also defines the threats and our security context. For that reason, the alliance that most EU Member States share with the United States, among others, is and must continue to be a central element in our security.

In the year in which we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance, it is time to rethink its strategic concept and bring it into line with the new reality. Following the end of the Cold War, it is time to move beyond the end of the end of the Cold War and bring these concepts into line with the new reality that is forming: the emergence of the Pacific, the greater relevance of Asia, the role that Russia is seeking to redefine for itself, and the threats posed by failed states and global terrorist groups, among others.

We are therefore seeking to play an active part in this strategic redefinition, as full partners in the Atlantic Alliance.

Flaviu Călin Rus (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the motion for a European Parliament resolution on the 'Role of NATO in the security architecture of the EU' as I feel that a strong, dynamic transatlantic relationship guarantees stability and security in Europe. In my opinion, strong ties between the EU and NATO make a significant contribution to the European Union's *raison d'être*, which is based on establishing peace both within its whole territory and beyond its borders.

Toomas Savi (ALDE), in writing. – I voted in favour of Ari Vatanen's report on the role of NATO in the security architecture of the EU. The rapporteur has pointed out the most important deficiencies of the current EU 'security architecture' and offers clear and effective solutions for improving the security of the European Union.

I agree with the rapporteur that it is crucial for Europe's security as well as for the world in general, to maintain and to deepen the co-operation between NATO and the EU. Even though there have been several improvements that have made the NATO-EU relations more effective, there is room for improvement in many aspects.

In order to develop a more efficient co-operation, all EU Member States should be present at the EU-NATO joint meetings. The recent years, bearing in mind the unresolved issues between Cyprus and Turkey, have showed clearly that the current EU-NATO meetings are not nearly as successful and productive as they could be. The USA and NATO must be regarded as partners not as rivals. The EU and NATO amend each other and together, our common goals can be attained the fastest and most effectively.

Peter Skinner (PSE), in writing. – I voted against this report. The strength and security of Europe has depended for some time on the allies willing to play an active role in our defence.

On Europe's borders and across the world today it is clear that NATO continues to provide the nexus of cooperation which provides for our safety and the safety of others.

Clearly from time to time changes in global strategic interests mean adjusting priorities and approaches. The need for NATO to maintain continued vigilance and be supported, especially in Afghanistan at this present time, is essential. That is why calls for more troop commitments and logistical support need to be heeded by other European nations. I also welcome the French commitment now recently announced.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), in writing. – The Conservative Delegation welcomes some aspects of this report, including the endorsement of NATO as the core of European security, and the call for Member States to invest more in defence. However, it is in essence a paean to ESDP, which we have opposed both in principle and in practice for more than ten years. It refers to the Treaty of Lisbon, which we have strenuously opposed, and also voices support for a permanent EU operational headquarters, backing for an EU 'White Book' on European defence, and unequivocal praise of the European Defence Agency. For these reasons we abstained on the report.

- Report: Pasqualina Napoletano (A6-0502/2008)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), in writing. – The Barcelona Process was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Summit for the Mediterranean held in Paris on July 13, 2008. It contributes towards peace and prosperity, and it will constitute a step towards economic and regional integration as well as ecological and climate cooperation between the Mediterranean countries. Since my country is a Mediterranean State, such a process is viewed with great attention. I agree that opening up the process to countries not involved in the partnership increases the likelihood of establishing parity in relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries and of tackling the problems of the region in a comprehensive way. Coming from the Mediterranean archipelago of Malta and Gozo, I fully appreciate the contributions which the process can make.

It is essential that the strategic value of Euro-Mediterranean relations and the Barcelona Process *acquis* be reaffirmed in the shape of regional and sub-regional programmes and common guidelines for bilateral cooperation. This has taken on an added importance in view of the recent issues in Gaza and the declarations in Cyprus.

Adam Bielan (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) Mr President, the objective of the Barcelona Process is to support the countries of the Southern Mediterranean as they develop and attain independence. It is important, within the framework of various programmes, for these countries to be able to exchange experiences with EU Member States which themselves have recently undergone political and economic transformations. To this end, it is necessary to establish appropriate cooperation frameworks.

I also supported the report, as EU support for the Mediterranean Region has no adverse effect on other regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Eastern Partnership.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Despite its careful language, the report goes astray in terms of what it objectively and consciously omits or tries to hide: for example, its failure to denounce and condemn the systematic and brutal violation of international law and human rights by Israel – which is settling the occupied territories of Palestine and which is oppressing the Palestinian people – and by Morocco, which is settling the Western Sahara and oppressing the Sahrawi people.

The report conceals the EU's unacceptable immigration policy and its inhuman, criminalising, security-focused and exploitative nature. In that respect, it accepts the provision in the agreements between the EU and the Mediterranean countries for 'funding of immigration centres'.

On the other hand, the report does not hide the fact that the model advocated for the so-called 'Union for the Mediterranean' is ultimately the same as that of the EU itself, guided by liberalisation of the markets, including energy, and by capitalist competition, thus trying to ensure political and economic control by the major powers. It sets out the objective of the 'creation of a ... Euro-Mediterranean free trade area' and not a 'Euro-Mediterranean partnership ... based on equality of treatment, solidarity, dialogue and respect for the specific asymmetries and characteristics of each country', as we proposed in an amendment that we tabled.

That is why we voted against.

Jens Holm and Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (SV) We support increased cooperation with countries in the Mediterranean region, but we cannot lend our support to increased EU power within integration policy, formulated in paragraph 29. We also regret the fact that the report does not impose any requirements on occupying powers such as Israel and Morocco. In a report that talks of strengthening human rights in the Mediterranean region, this should be a minimum requirement. We therefore voted against this report in the vote.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (NL) The Mediterranean is the EU's southern border. For many years, the EU has pursued close cooperation with coastal states that do not belong to the EU and some of which will never be able to join the EU. This cooperation is deemed important in the south of Europe but is of far less significance to the rest of Europe. Despite this, there are no major differences of opinion about this, because nobody objects to good relations at the EU's external borders. Mainly on France's initiative, this cooperation has been further intensified lately. In this connection, separate, permanent structures have been put in place. The question is what the purpose of these permanent structures is. Is it an attempt to move closer towards the Syrian and Libyan dictatorships, which are constantly violating human rights? Is it an attempt to find an alternative to full EU membership that has been promised in the long term to the coastal states of Croatia, Montenegro, Albania and Turkey? Is it a means of further tightening the ties with Israel despite the fact that, as a result of the election result on 10 February, no Israeli cooperation can be expected for the next four years in establishing a neighbouring Palestinian state with equal rights? I cannot endorse this proposal for the time being.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The projects proposed by the newly-formed Union for the Mediterranean all sound well and good: the Solar Plan, collaboration in civil protection, joint initiatives for the depollution of the Mediterranean and new port and motorway projects. However, as we all know, you can say what you like on paper. Whether anything will actually be done is doubtful. After all, the organisation's predecessor, Euromed, did not actually achieve anything. Moreover, as long as the participating states do not see any actual possibility of these projects coming to fruition, they will surely not sacrifice existing good bilateral relations for the sake of a vague project.

As I do not believe that the new Union for the Mediterranean will be any more successful than its predecessor organisation, I have voted against this report.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted for this report. I believe that the concept of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which first took shape in the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, is ready to be taken forward in a more practical and effective manner than has been the case hitherto. I am pleased that the rapporteur supports the decision to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the Union for the Mediterranean by enhancing the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. This is because I firmly believe that establishing a serious, lasting partnership ought to go beyond the scope of mere economic cooperation and financial support – although these are undoubtedly important – and should enable the objectives of peace and institutional stability, as well as prosperity and economic growth, to be achieved.

I share the rapporteur's hopes that the strengthening of Euro-Mediterranean relations will provide a boost to the development of an area of collective and individual security, going beyond the area covered by the agreement, and that the European Union can contribute to the promotion of the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and mutual understanding between different peoples and cultures; these, unfortunately, are still often seriously infringed even in countries with which the EU maintains regular economic relations. To this end, I hope that the instruments to be made available will be adequate in terms of achieving the ambitious goals that this partnership is setting itself.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE) *in writing*. – (PL) What is of significance to me is that the agreement, within the framework of the Barcelona Process, facilitates the regulation of many regional strategic issues such as energy security, environmental protection and water management.

I would also like to draw your attention to the substantial progress that has been made in terms of creating a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone, which is to be definitively established in 2010. At the same time, I would like to emphasise the need for considerably broader cooperation in the following sectors: services (medical and educational), agriculture, as this provides the basis for the region's economy, and, in conjunction with the latter, the monitoring of food security.

Finally, I would like to raise the issue of supporting democratic change in the Mediterranean region. In my opinion, this issue goes hand in hand with the need to promote social integration and support the activities of the inhabitants in the countries of that region. Dialogue, the promotion of multicultural and religious tolerance, as well as educational projects, may pave the way for a peaceful solution to the conflicts in which those countries are currently involved.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I and my British Conservative colleagues support stronger multilateral EU-Mediterranean relations as promoted by the Barcelona Process and its successor, the Union for the Mediterranean. This will allow for closer economic and political co-operation in terms of enhanced aid and trade facilities, as well as security issues, in exchange for the promotion of common values in the sphere of democracy and human rights and the rule of law.

We wish to make clear our opposition to the Treaty of Lisbon in accordance with our long-held policy and we cannot therefore accept the references to it in Paragraph 10 of this report. However, overall we support the Report and therefore have voted in favour.

- Report: Konrad Szymanski (A6-0037/2009)

John Attard-Montalto (PSE), *in writing*. – We have voted on the report of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy Instrument and the following points have been made:

- the Mediterranean component of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument should complement the Barcelona Process, and the ENP's objectives need to be more clearly defined in order to strengthen the Barcelona Process by favouring a multilateral regional approach;
- there should be enhanced EU involvement in the Black Sea region and an ambitious Eastern Partnership. There is also a need to accelerate the establishment of a free-trade zone in relation to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova in particular, as soon as partner countries are ready;
- an Eastern Neighbourhood assembly ('Euroeast'), with the participation of the European Parliament, should be created on the same lines as the Euromed and EuroLat assemblies with a view to implementing the ENPI in the countries of eastern Europe, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

I believe that we have to tread carefully to take into consideration Russia's sensitivities on the immediate neighbours once we are seeing a new approach between the United States and Russia.

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, I voted for the report. At a time as delicate as the present, I would argue that we need enhanced cooperation in neighbourhood and partnership relations in order to establish a friendly environment in the closest environs of the European Union, as the ENP's main objective sets out.

I hope to see greater integration and a resulting rapprochement in the economic and political spheres between the European Union and neighbouring countries, and am therefore in full agreement with the report by Mr Konrad Szymański. It calls on the Commission, together with the partner governments, to further develop mechanisms for consultation with civil society and local authorities, in order to better involve them in the design and monitoring of the ENPI's implementation. It also urges the Commission and national, regional and local authorities to promote twinning programmes between towns and regions and, in addition, calls for the annual action programmes in the fields of democracy, the rule of law and human rights to be pursued more ambitiously, in line with the objectives set up in the ENP action plans, asking for more to be done to persuade the partner governments to commit themselves to action in those fields.

Sylwester Chruszcz (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) I gave my support to the report on the Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy Instrument today. I believe that the countries lying beyond the Eastern borders of the EU are our strategic partners. Even if we are unable to offer them the prospect of membership in the near future, we should develop economic and political cooperation for the sake of the common European good.

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) I supported Mr Konrad Szymanowski's report on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. It is a worthwhile EU initiative, aimed at fostering cooperation between the EU and partner states. This cooperation includes, amongst others, efforts to promote dialogue and reform, environmental protection and action in the field of energy security. It also includes efforts to reduce poverty, promote equality between women and men, promote employment and social protection, foster cross-border cooperation, promote health, education and human rights, combat terrorism and organised crime, and promote cooperation in the scientific, educational, innovation and cultural spheres. It is therefore essential to conduct a substantive and financial review of all ENPI Operational Programmes, taking into account the countries, the regions and the issues involved. These activities should expand the free trade zone.

It is important to note that the Eastern Partnership should not hinder neighbouring countries wishing to apply for membership of the EU. The section which mentions the EUR 500 billion allocated to Georgia between 2008-2010 for reconstruction work and aid to refugees, following the depredations of war, is also worthy of support. I also accept that it is advisable to review our cooperation with Belarus, along with the level of funding allocated to that country, in order to ascertain whether the policy of re-engagement with that country, initiated in September 2008, should be continued. Furthermore, I agree that we need to guarantee that any financial assistance granted to Russia contributes to strengthening democratic standards in that country.

Alexandru Nazare (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) The European Neighbourhood Policy is a vital instrument for ensuring stability in the area to the east of the EU. Indeed, recent events in the region such as the crisis in Georgia and the gas crisis have demonstrated once again the need for the EU to have a strategy capable of ensuring that it plays an active role in this area.

I support this report because it highlights the importance of initiatives such as the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership. They are particularly worthwhile in consolidating cooperation with the countries in the region, especially Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, but also the states from the Caucasus and the Caspian Region.

I would also point out that effective implementation of the ENP cannot be achieved without increasing the level of financial support to the programmes funded via the ENPI and ensuring a higher level of transparency in the allocation of funds.

Furthermore, the majority of these resources must be allocated with a view to involving civil society in the partner countries in common projects and to supporting the mobility of their citizens. The ENPI can become more effective through greater rapprochement by the citizens from the partner countries and by encouraging the process of Europeanisation at every level. For this reason, I support the removal of the obstacles blocking

the free movement of persons coming from these countries, especially through easing the visa requirements applied to these states.

Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) Trans-border cooperation is an important stimulus for the sustainable development of neighbouring border regions. More intensive contacts between people and personal experience of democracy and rule of law are important preconditions for the optimum implementation of projects under the European Neighbourhood Policy, which it is why we need to create specific instruments to ensure appropriate monitoring of how common operational programmes are managed and implemented on both sides of the EU's borders.

I welcome the fact that in his report on reviewing the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy Instrument the rapporteur Konrad Szymański included trans-border cooperation within the remit of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). I have voted for the report, which will facilitate the negotiating process for countries applying for membership to the EU. Countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova will be able to get closer to the EU by benefiting from the ENP.

My views are to some extent based on my experience during the implementation of the Community INTERREG IIIA initiative involving a joint Slovak-Polish drainage project for the community of Chmeľnica on the Slovak and the Polish town of Piwniczna either side of our common border.

I firmly believe that we need to support any initiative aimed at specialist training, including learning the languages of neighbouring countries and partnership initiatives for government employees. I believe that proper analysis in respect of increasing capacity and building institutions on both sides of the EU's borders, as proposed by the rapporteur, will contribute towards the implementation of this instrument.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted against the report by Mr Szymański on the review of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. I believe we must admit that in some of the countries covered by the instrument, no progress at all has been made towards the initial objectives of promoting democracy, stability and good governance, integration and economic convergence with the policies of the European Union. While, on the one hand, assistance and a neighbourhood approach by the EU may act as a stimulus for the dissemination and implementation of good practice, it is, however, true that it is vital for this assistance and the financial aid granted by the EU to be conditional.

On this point, I agree with my fellow Member in believing that sectoral and general budget support under the ENPI should be made available only to governments which are able to implement it in a transparent, effective and accountable manner and where it constitutes a real incentive; for this very reason, however, I cannot agree to a review of the ENPI as set out in his report. Much work still remains to be done before we can talk of the development of a genuine free trade area, otherwise there is a risk of a worsening of the already weak socio-institutional conditions in the countries involved and the squandering of huge resources by the European Union.

- Report: Thijs Berman (A6-0036/2009)

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted for the report by Mr Berman on financing of actions other than Official Development Assistance in countries falling under Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006.

I agree with the rapporteur that the legislative proposal put forward by Parliament ought to ensure that countries which do not fulfil the criteria for classification as eligible for Official Development Assistance, but which are open to the promotion of political, economic and governance values similar to those of the Community and with which the Community has strategic relations, should be supported on projects deserving attention. Examples are the creation of partnerships between economic, academic and scientific operators, particularly in sectors of great importance such as scientific and technological research, transport, energy and the environment.

I believe that this can only be of benefit, not only to the countries involved and the European Union, but also to the entire international community, subject to proper assessment of eligibility for funding and the validity of the project in question at any particular time.

- Report: Hanne Dahl (A6-0426/2008)

Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, I support the report by Mrs Dahl and I am in favour, quoting Article 1 of the Publications Office of the European Union, of it being 'an

interinstitutional office with the task of publishing the publications of the institutions of the European Communities and the European Union under optimum conditions'. I agree with the call by Mrs Dahl to European institutions to alter the legal bases for interinstitutional bodies in such a way as to permit a clear allocation of administrative and political responsibilities, since at the moment it is difficult to identify these.

I believe that the use of information is the main way to bring the European Union closer to its citizens and, in this context, multilingualism must be the key instrument in putting into practice the aims of the Publications Office through the simultaneous publication of the Official Journal in all the European Union official languages, so as to ensure that it is clearly understood by everyone. This principle ought to extend to all the activities carried out by the Publications Office.

Nicodim Bulzesc (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this draft decision since it takes into account the EP's demands and clearly allocates administrative and political responsibilities to the Office and the Commission, unlike the previous decision dating from 2000.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Even after all the years since its formation, the EU is still not actually close to its citizens. It simply assumes that all citizens use the Internet and can find their way around the EU website without difficulty. However, this is not the case, as the web pages are often only understandable to insiders and are also not always intelligible in all languages. Many states also have a strong tradition of printed media, which are an important means of providing non-partisan information to citizens.

The EU is always emphasising the importance of information policy, but in this regard is allowing an information gap to develop. Firstly, the broadsheets will suffer huge losses if the Official Journal entries that are required to be published are dropped and, secondly, all those who are not familiar with modern technology will be at a disadvantage. For this reason, I have voted against the Dahl report.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted for the report by Mrs Dahl on the organisation and operation of the Publications Office of the European Union.

I agree with the rapporteur that the previous decision, dating from 20 July 2000, ought to be replaced, in particular in order to take proper account of the observation made by the European Parliament during the discharge procedure for the 2001 financial year. I believe that the report is also useful in clarifying the allocation of political and administrative responsibilities within the Publications Office of the European Union and that such clarification is necessary in order to ensure that the office carries out its tasks in a correct, streamlined and efficient manner.

President. – That concludes the explanations of vote.

11. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

12. Communication of Council common positions: see Minutes

13. Documents received: see Minutes

14. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes

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

16. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

17. Adjournment of the session

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

(The sitting closed at 12.50.)