

THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2008

IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

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

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union (new Rule 202a) (debate)

President. - The next item is the report (A6-0347/2008) by Carlos Carnero González, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on insertion in Parliament's Rules of Procedure of a new Rule 202a on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union (2007/2240(REG)).

Carlos Carnero González, rapporteur. – (ES) Mr President, the decision my report proposes to this Chamber is, above all, political, in the strictest sense of the word. The formal decision we are about to adopt, though clearly relevant, is the very least of it.

Indeed, we are about to amend our Rules of Procedure to make official what is already a reality, what the different Union institutions have been doing for years. I would like to remind Members of that.

We are proposing that this House should use the Union flag in all its meeting places and on the most formal occasions, for example, at constituent sittings or when receiving heads of state. We also propose that the anthem should be played on these occasions, that the motto 'United in Diversity' should be included in all our written documents and that Europe Day should be celebrated.

Mr President, although you were in favour of the idea, we are not suggesting that the euro should be used as a symbol. However, in our opinion, the euro is a great tool, a wonderful instrument that is undoubtedly helping us to deal with the international financial crisis. Where would we be without the euro? We would be back in this torturous situation of competitive devaluation that would have brought our real economy to its knees in the face of international financial speculation.

The most important aspect of my report is the political message to citizens. This message is very clear: the symbols of the Union are alive and well in the institution that represents, more directly than any other, the 500 million inhabitants of our 27 Member States. This means that the constitutional process that was launched in 2002 with the European Convention lives on in spite of frequent and sizeable obstacles and setbacks.

The Convention, of which I had the honour of being a member, along with other distinguished Members here today, had no doubts about including the symbols of the EU in the Union's primary law for the first time. It thus happily brought to an end a curious situation whereby the most important body of law did not recognise what the public had long accepted: the symbols.

The decision in this respect was unanimous and no one challenged it during the ratification process; on the contrary, it was one of the provisions most welcomed by Europe's supporters. I have to say that it came as a huge surprise, therefore, when the Intergovernmental Conference which adopted the Lisbon Treaty decided to remove all mention of European symbols from this document.

The fact is that, through our decision today, we can undo this error. Of course, we are not amending primary law, but we can do our part and move a step closer to formalising Union symbols within the institutional framework.

Symbols express a shared goal and shared values. In Europe's case, it is the desire to build a Union of and for all citizens who want unity, freedom, democracy, justice, equality and solidarity, which are European values that we also consider to be universal.

Symbols also allow us to establish what we are and who we want to be in relation to the rest of the world, which recognises us by them. Who, for instance, has not felt proud to represent the Union when wearing the election observer's waistcoat?

Furthermore, symbols help us to remember where we came from, that day when our story of unity, growth and freedom began to be written.

What the President of Parliament said a few days ago in Madrid about young people and history has much to do with symbols. We must remind young people where we came from, who we are and where we are going. Symbols get this message across quickly and clearly. These symbols unite, not divide, us. This is not only a great virtue, but, more than anything, a huge advantage.

Mr President, the wonderful writer Aldous Huxley said that the most important thing is not experience, but what you do with that experience. The same applies to symbols. The flag is not intended to be an icon, but to be used in our everyday lives to strengthen the unity for which we are known.

József Szájer, *on behalf of the PPE-DE group.* – (HU) Mr President, I went to Kiev recently and the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry building could hardly be seen as it had been adorned with a three-storey-high European flag. If this symbol can be given so much respect and honour outside the European Union I am sure that here too the European Union can treat the symbols with respect. I would like to correct my colleague, who has prepared an excellent report, on this point. The rule on the symbols of the European Union is at present part of the *acquis communautaire*, of European legislation: the flag with twelve stars and a blue background, the anthem based on the *Ode to Joy*, the long-standing meetings of the heads of State and Government, and even the headquarters of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, and of course we hold our sessions in Strasbourg. And at this moment, so to speak, there is no regulation vacuum since, at this moment, rules do exist for the symbols of the European Union, whether they are in the Lisbon Treaty or not.

At the same time, an important aim of this report is to regulate how our own institution, the European Parliament, does honour to our standard. It is my conviction that the sense of identity, of where we belong, is very important. We often talk about how our citizens do not understand our complicated Europe. The symbols are one approach, helping them to feel closer to the European Union. Many, many people are fond of these symbols, honour and respect them, and I am sure that it is for us too, here in Parliament, as committed Europeans, a point of major importance to bring in a rule on how we use the symbols of the European Union in our own institution. Thank you for your attention.

Costas Botopoulos, *on behalf of the PSE Group.* – (EL) Mr President, why is it so very important that we should make such an effort and hold this debate, especially now, on the subject of the symbols of the European Union? I believe that there are two reasons. Firstly, we as the European Parliament must show in the way we habitually go about our business that the EU is about more than just legal texts. Let me remind you that, as the rapporteur has said, the symbols originate from the Constitutional Treaty. An attempt was made to institutionalise them, but it is very significant that today we are continuing this effort to keep them alive. Why? Because they happen to show that Europe is not built on flawed legal texts, which are necessary but are difficult for the various nations to understand. They happen to symbolise something else, and how appropriate that fine Greek verb is here: a political project, an idea of Europe. As such, I think it must be kept alive, especially today.

The second reason lies in what the symbols conceal - the symbols behind the symbols: in other words, the idea of the EU's common action based on its values. That is what the symbols are: a common action based on values that we need now more than ever.

Thus if we say that the crisis we are all experiencing – and I am referring not only to the economic crisis, but also to Europe's present institutional and moral crisis – is a symbol of these difficult times, I think the EU's response must be united action. This means that we could potentially all move forward together.

I believe there could not be a more apt and at the same time more bitter example than that of Iceland today. This country does not belong to the EU, but it is so buffeted by the economic storm that its people are wondering whether they should indeed be part of this 'Europe of ideas'.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – Mr President, the symbols of the European Union are a celebration of the unity that we have achieved and that we hope to strengthen. Symbols such as the EU flag, the anthem and the motto are already widely used at official events and within all Member States.

The European flag and anthem, with which we all are so familiar today, were first adopted at the 1985 Milan European Council. By then the flag had already been in existence for 30 years. The flag is intended to represent perfection, complementarity and solidarity and to symbolise Europe's unity. The motto 'unified in diversity' is the most recent of the symbols. It originates from an initiative by the European Parliament and can now be seen as a definition of the European project.

During the plenary yesterday, Ingrid Betancourt of Latin America and France said that she dreams of a Latin America that could cooperate and be as united as the European Union. It is clear that our symbols serve as an identity and an indication to the rest of the world that we have accomplished great things together.

Although I believe in this unity and hope that it continues, I have been disappointed that on many occasions we have not been unanimous. For example, last week the European Union President, Mr Sarkozy, invited only four of the Member States to discuss the financial crisis. It is very interesting that the President of the European Union does not pay attention to the solidarity and unity of the European Union. This action – like all actions of this kind – only serves to divide rather than to unite us. It is ironic that we are so proud of our unity and solidarity, but at the same time the President of the Union seems to pick favourites with regard to the most important current issue.

I hope that by using the flag, anthem and motto more often we will all be reminded of the values that are vital to the existence of the European Union but, at the same time, we must remember that how we behave is most important of all.

Bogdan Pęk, *on behalf of the UEN Group.* – (PL) Mr President, as the rapporteur stated, this debate is entirely political in nature and is taking place in a very specific political context. I agree with previous speakers that Europe is currently experiencing a crisis of values and that values are Europe's lifeblood. Imposing symbols in violation of legislation currently in force in Europe is no substitute for these values. The symbols concerned were rejected at the Intergovernmental Conference that confirmed the Lisbon Treaty. Nonetheless, Parliament is today endeavouring to impose them. In so doing, Parliament is acting in defiance of clear principles according to which measures to be directly implemented and binding on all Member States may only be imposed through a treaty.

Such a method of imposing measures intended to be binding is unacceptable. It violates the fundamental principle upon which the European Union is based, and which involves unconditional compliance with international law and agreements. It amounts to side-stepping the provision rejected in the European Treaty and bringing in measures aimed at establishing via the back door a pseudo-state called Europe.

Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I fully support the parliamentary initiative on the flag and the anthem. European unity needs these symbols because they bring Europe closer to the people and create an identity, and so they need to be officially recognised. Against this background, I see our decision today as a small but significant step to bring us back, as soon as possible, to normality.

The removal of the anthem and the flag from the Treaty – the background to which I of course am fully aware of – is and remains an essentially barbaric act against European unity, for which those who called for this step ultimately bear responsibility. The fact is that we have played into the hands of the Ganleys, Klausens and Haiders: their nationalist slogans about a European 'superstate', which were targeted against European integration, have thus gained a veneer of credibility.

However, that is just one side of the coin. There is another issue which I would like raise and which causes me no less concern. The citizens of the European Union do not want or need a furore about flags and anthems in Brussels. What they want is a social and democratic Europe, a European Union which offers them effective protection from the negative repercussions of globalisation. They want a clear answer as to what, or whom, the Union is protecting, the people or the markets? They want serious action to be taken against wage, social and tax dumping and an end, once and for all, to the galloping casino capitalism promoted by financial jugglers. For that, we need a political European Union.

Hanne Dahl, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.* – (DA) Mr President, I wonder if there is anyone in this Chamber who still remembers when the Constitution was changed to the Treaty of Lisbon after its rejection in the Netherlands and France. The symbols of the EU were removed, as it was thought that EU citizens were particularly sceptical about the Constitution's objective of turning the EU into a polity. Now, the European Parliament – which of course is the only EU body for which citizens can vote – is in the process of reintroducing them. This most closely resembles a parody of democracy; one executed by institutions with

no respect for those they are there for. The EU is there for citizens; citizens are not there for the EU. For this reason, it is improper to first remove something on the grounds of wanting to fulfil citizens' wishes, only to reintroduce it a few months later.

I must say with regard to this matter that I am quite simply ashamed to sit in the European Parliament. We cannot allow ourselves to become notorious for duping citizens in this way. I would call on everyone who has even a modicum of respect for the voters who elected them, to vote against this proposal today.

Jim Allister (NI). - Mr President, this Parliament wants these symbols for one reason only – to inflate its ego and attach the trappings of statehood to the EU.

I have a much better anthem and flag, thank you very much, and I am not about to trade them for the tawdry baubles of Eurofederalism. *Ode to Joy*, which we are going to purloin, may be a very nice tune, but so is *Jingle Bells*, and like *Jingle Bells* it heralds a fantasy, the fantasy that the EU is good for you. But unlike *Jingle Bells*, it will damage your national sovereignty and the right to control your own destiny. More like 'code to destroy' than *Ode to Joy*!

As for the flag, which we have stolen from the Council of Europe, even its proponents do not know what it means. We have as many explanations in the AFCO Committee as to what the stars signify as there are stars on the flag.

This proposal to me exposes the insatiable fanaticism of Europhiles. The ink was not dry on the Lisbon Treaty, which deliberately excluded these symbols, before there was an insistence that Parliament give them official status nonetheless.

My constituents do not want an EU flag and an EU anthem. They want the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to the Lisbon Treaty, thank you very much!

Íñigo Méndez de Vigo (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to mention a compatriot of yours, who, during the French Revolution, was upbraided in the street by a sans-culotte, who said: 'Why are you not carrying the *Tricolore*, the symbol of the revolution?'. That compatriot of yours replied that there was no need to show on the outside what one felt in his heart.

I am more one of those who, no doubt out of modesty, like a good Spaniard, do not externalise their feelings. However, this does not mean that I do not feel moved when I see the European flag hanging from Ljubljana Town Hall or when, at a meeting with our colleague Pierre Lequiller in Yvelines, I heard the European anthem follow the *Marseillaise*, or when, yesterday, I read in a newspaper that the winner of the Prince of Asturias Prize, the Bulgarian Tzvetan Todorov, had said that 'united in diversity' was what European meant today. That is our motto.

I am not one of those with a narrow, restrictive mentality or a beleaguered outlook on life, who think that the European flag is in competition with the national flag or that the European anthem aims to replace their national anthem. That, Mr President, is simply ridiculous.

Symbols show that we belong to a community; they do not, in any way, represent an attempt to eradicate our individual native countries. They indicate added value, that we share something with other Europeans.

I therefore believe that the initiative taken by Mr Carnero, whom I congratulate, and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, is the right one. It is an initiative that, at a time when we are 'stitching together the two Europes', to use the wonderful expression of our dearly remembered colleague Bronisław Geremek, shows our fellow Europeans that we have the same values. These values are also expressed outwardly, including, but not exclusively, through symbols.

The Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats will therefore vote in favour of this proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure, and I look forward to feeling moved, like everybody else, when I next hear the 'Ode to Joy' in this Chamber.

Pierre Pribetich (PSE). - (FR) Symbols are to sentiment what allegories are to thought. As colourful as it is, this quotation by the philosopher Alain is nevertheless a clear illustration of what these symbols represent for the European Union today. Listening to the Beethoven symphony or celebrating Europe together on 9 May are precisely the elements we are going to use from now on to ensure that Europe stays alive. They are a concrete expression of the values on which the Union is built, markers that gradually become implanted in the memories of the 500 million Europeans.

By inserting this Rule in Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the work by our colleague Carlos Carnero González, whom I congratulate, is sending out a political message from Parliament to the citizens based on these values, as proven by the opposition of the Eurosceptics. No politics without symbols! Giving Europe an identity through an anthem, a flag and a motto gives the citizens living and working in Europe an opportunity to see themselves as part of a single entity united in diversity. Displaying these symbols at all levels and in all institutional areas will ensure that there is a constant reminder of the values that inspire Europe.

I would nevertheless like to stress today that Europe is experiencing a serious crisis of confidence and that we need to go even beyond these symbolic elements and envisage and rebuild together a strong sense of belonging.

Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski (UEN). - (PL) Mr President, symbols such as a flag, an anthem, a common currency and holidays are intrinsic features of statehood. This was the very reason why it was decided not to adopt them during negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty. It is duplicitous to maintain that a decision on reinstating them may be taken internally by one of the European institutions. The European Parliament is a legislative body. It must not send out a signal that it is acceptable to find ways to circumvent previous intergovernmental agreements. Parliament must act as the guardian of democracy and the rule of law. If the European Parliament attempts to resurrect previously rejected symbols, it will become an anachronism. One can readily understand that every institution should wish to use specific symbols. In this case, however, it must be understood that a broader political dimension is involved, as the rapporteur pointed out. The move should therefore be opposed.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL). - (DA) Mr President, as has already been said, the common symbols – the anthem, the flag, the motto – were removed from the Constitutional Treaty when it was changed to the Treaty of Lisbon. Some proponents of the Treaty of Lisbon even claimed this demonstrated that we were attentive to popular reluctance. In some countries the removal of the quasi-constitutional symbols was actually used to argue that there was no reason to hold a referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon. For example, the Danish Government stated in a document addressed to the Danish people that the Treaty of Lisbon, and I quote, 'will be purged of symbolic provisions on the EU anthem, motto and flag'.

'Will be purged of!' We should ask at this point what difference this has made in reality. The answer is 'none'. In its reply to my enquiry, the Commission itself wrote that the fact that the symbols are not mentioned in the Treaty does not alter their status in any way. 'Does not alter their status in any way!' And now Parliament is to go one step further. Perhaps someone believes that more intensive use of the symbols will arouse enthusiasm about the EU. Perhaps someone believes that the symbols can mask a lack of benefits for the people. I personally do not. Many citizens would just see it as a further example of the EU elite doing exactly as it pleases. This would send out completely the wrong signal, and I do not think that we should adopt this proposal.

Philip Claeys (NI). - (NL) Mr President, I wonder what is really the point of this report and the amendment to the Rules of Procedure that is the purpose of the report. According to the explanatory statement, the fact that they are not included in the Treaty of Lisbon does not prevent the institutions from continuing to use them, so why do they have to be enshrined in the Rules of Procedure of this Parliament?

The context in which we should place this debate is that of the European Constitution and the referenda that have invalidated the Constitution. The symbols were deliberately not included in the Treaty because the Dutch, for example, want nothing to do with a European superstate and with the outward symbols of a European superstate. In the meantime the Netherlands has ratified the Treaty of Lisbon. What are we going to do now? Now we are going to enshrine the European symbols in our Rules of Procedure anyway, through the back door.

This amendment to the Rules of Procedure is unnecessary. It is in fact a gratuitous provocation and it is sticking two fingers up at the Dutch voters and, by extension, all European voters who want nothing to do with a European superstate. Well done, ladies and gentlemen!

Maria da Assunção Esteves (PPE-DE). - (PT) Yesterday, here in plenary, the European anthem could have formed a backdrop to Ingrid Betancourt's tears. The anthem would have culminated in a call for the collective sharing of memories and desires. Every human project needs a symbolic dimension, from the strength of the words with which we govern the people of Europe to the rituals of political representation that seat us on the left and on the right, in the dialectic of parliamentary debate. There can be no history without symbols.

We need words, a flag, an anthem or a motto. The universal project of Europe cannot be forged in the collective imagination without the chemistry of symbols, because symbols depict not only the world that we have, but also the world that we want to have. They link the deepest reason and emotion within us. Their value comes from the identity process that they trigger. How can the great project of Europe, based on the transcendental value of human dignity, open towards the world, leading the way in terms of rights, manage without a symbolic dimension? European thought has left us with a long record on the meaning of symbols. Politics cannot ignore this, because politics carries with it all the dimensions of the human being in terms of what is also ideal and sublime.

Richard Corbett (PSE). - Mr President, I am somewhat surprised at the storm in a teacup that this change to our Rules of Procedure has provoked in some quarters. We know that the Member States decided some time ago not to elevate the European flag and anthem to Treaty status. They decided not to give them such an elevated status but to leave them with their current status.

What is their current status? They are simply recognised by the institutions. The European Council did so as long ago as 1985. By the way, Mrs Thatcher was a member of the European Council then. I see some of her admirers are now repudiating her decision. I must say that I myself had some hesitation about adopting a symbol chosen by Mrs Thatcher as the flag of the European Union. However, in the spirit of all-party compromise and consensus, I am willing to accept it.

That is the status the flag and anthem were given – recognition by the institutions. There is, however, an anomaly. We, the European Parliament, have never actually recognised them in our Rules. It is quite logical that we tidy up this anomaly and put a reference to the flag in our Rules of Procedure.

How people can make such a fuss about such an obvious thing to do – about such a normal procedure, which respects the decisions of the Member States not to elevate it to Treaty status – I do not know. But then the ways of working of the Eurosceptics – not least in my own country – have always been a bit of a mystery. When you see that this flag has been around for many years, if you saw the European supporters at the Ryder Cup, when Europe played America at golf just a couple of months ago – where people, who probably included Conservative Eurosceptics, were waving the European flag – it really does look a little ridiculous when they now make such a fuss about this reasonable change to our Rules of Procedure.

Panayotis Demetriou (PPE-DE). – (EL) Mr President, as all the previous speakers have said, the symbols of the European Union have existed for many years. What are we in the European Parliament aiming for by amending the Rules? We wish to emphasise what is called the proper use of symbols, as is done in all organisations.

Unfortunately, there have been unjustified reactions from both Member States and citizens. These are reactions from Member States that think that adopting and promoting the symbols of the EU will lead to the creation of a super-state. For heaven's sake, will symbols really create the super-state that some Members have talked about?

Some say that the national morale of peoples and states will be affected. If the national morale of anyone is so low that it can be eclipsed by a symbol of unity of all states, then I pity what some call 'national pride'. Such arguments have been heard in this House.

There is another question. If some citizens and Member States react so badly to these symbols, how can they continue to be members of this EU when they cannot even bear to look at its symbols? This is a contradiction.

The European Parliament is right to proceed as usual today with the formal adoption of these symbols. It is sending out a message: the EU must advance united under its symbols in order to become complete and reach a point where it can play its part. Its role is to promote principles and values throughout the world.

György Schöpflin (PPE-DE). - Mr President, we frequently hear the opinion that symbols are a waste of time and that the European Union should not concern itself with such irrelevant questions. Rather, this argument goes, the European Union's job is to focus on bread-and-butter issues like employment or trade.

This approach is completely mistaken and wholly misunderstands what symbols are about. If you look carefully at how institutions work, then it will rapidly become clear that every institution maintains a set of symbols. These symbols carry a message that people will recognise and act as a shorthand version of that institution. Without institutions, democratic politics cannot exist.

So symbols are a necessary part of democracy that the EU regards as being central to its identity. Besides, if symbols were as marginal as their opponents say, then why bother to oppose them? The European Parliament, as the pivotal democratic body of the European Union, has every reason to promote the symbols of Europe as a means of connecting itself with the voters of Europe. Those who are against the symbols of Europe are basically questioning European democracy itself.

One could further argue that this is too fluid and crisis-ridden a time to be thinking of the symbols of Europe, and thus that it is not the right moment for Parliament to spend time on symbols. Maybe so, but timing is something that always can and will be debated. In the long run, it will not matter whether the symbols of Parliament and of the European Union are debated now or at some later date. So I give my full support to this important and cogent report.

Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE). - Mr President, our federalist friends should not try and recruit Mrs Thatcher to their cause. She would be appalled at the developments that have taken place in the European Union.

We have heard that symbols are important, yet we are constantly reassured that the European Union has no ambition to become a state despite every resolution and piece of legislation through this Parliament taking us further in that direction. Of course, the outstanding example of this was the Constitution. This was rejected and then re-emerged as the Treaty of Lisbon.

In order to try and sell the Treaty of Lisbon, national negotiators decided that parts of the Constitution that could be interpreted as impinging on statehood, such as the flag and the hymn, should be removed.

Indeed, British Government ministers used as a selling point when they were trying to sell the Treaty of Lisbon to our people that it was somehow different to the Constitution.

My constituents in the East of England do not want a Constitution, they do not want the Treaty of Lisbon and they certainly do not want a state called Europe. I think it is an affront to them to try and introduce, or give official character to, these symbols.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (PSE). - (RO) The symbols of the European Union ensure that its identity is asserted and can be decisive elements in the communication with the public and its emotional attachment to the European institutions.

The Parliament has recognised and adopted the following symbols of the Union: the flag, which consists of a circle with twelve golden stars on a blue background, the anthem, excerpt from the "Ode to Joy" which comes from the Ninth Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven and the motto "United in diversity". The flag is raised on all premises of the Parliament and on the occasion of official events. By introducing regulations concerning the use by the European Parliament of the European Union symbols in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Parliament is sending a strong political signal.

The Parliament celebrates Europe Day on 9 May. I suggest that the European Parliament should organise a yearly competition for Europe Day dedicated to the young generation who should show how they see the future of Europe and especially how they wish to contribute to making this future a reality.

Marios Matsakis (ALDE). - Mr President, in the northern part of European Cyprus, on the Kyrenia mountain range, there is a mammoth one-kilometre-long Turkish flag, not an EU flag, to be seen. In fact in the whole of the northern part of Cyprus, there is a plethora of Turkish flags present, not EU flags. This is symbolic not of the unity of Europe but of the division imposed by the Turkish army on a small EU Member State.

With the EU-Turkey accession negotiations in progress and with peace talks in Cyprus under way, pressure must be applied firmly on the Turkish Government by the EU to remove its troops and accompanying symbol from Cyprus and allow our proud EU flag to fly freely in that corner of the EU. The EU flag in Cyprus symbolises unity. The Turkish flag symbolises division.

Let us all help to raise the EU flag in the whole of Cyprus as soon as possible.

Andrew Duff (ALDE). - Mr President, I find it especially strange – tragic even – that the symbols are attacked by people who were formerly from Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. We recall the flags being waved in the crowds in Tallinn, East Berlin and Budapest. We recall the anthem being played at the Brandenburg Gate. These things were not imposed or prescribed by parliamentary rules of procedure but were inspired by the hearts and emotions of the citizens. The symbols are symbols of our dignified values of peace and solidarity.

Íñigo Méndez de Vigo (PPE-DE). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to put the following question to those who have said that symbols and anthems belong to the State.

The city in which I live has a flag – the flag of Madrid – and the community in which I live – the Community of Madrid – has its own flag and anthem. Is it because they are states? Do they harbour ambitions to become a state? Do those who say that flags and anthems are national symbols wish to abolish local and regional flags?

I would like an answer from my fellow Members.

President. - I myself have the flag of my rugby club at home!

Richard Corbett (PSE). - Mr President, just to add to Mr Méndez de Vigo's point, the International Olympic Committee has a flag and an anthem. From what the British Conservatives have just been saying, I can only conclude that the International Olympic Committee is a state by their definition.

Carlos Carnero González, rapporteur. – (ES) Mr President, I should like to begin by thanking all those who spoke during this debate, although it is clear that I openly disagree with some of them.

Symbols do not represent only states. At this stage of our development, symbols do not embody confrontation, combat or battles; they are a means of conveying ideas and of uniting people around values. This is what our flag, our anthem, our motto and Europe Day represent.

The Intergovernmental Conference was forced by some to remove symbols from the Treaty, against the will of the vast majority. This vast majority preferred to forge ahead with the essentials of the Constitution rather than get caught up in the traps set by those challenging not only the symbols but also the need to progress further in political union. For that reason, 16 countries, including my own, issued a statement to the effect that, in their view, the use of symbols was a fact of life, official and, what is more, something that should be welcomed.

Nobody questioned the European Union's symbols during the referendum campaigns that resulted in the non-ratification of the Constitution. Let us be serious: can anyone remember large sections of the French and Dutch population saying 'no' to the Constitution because it referred to Union symbols? I, for one, cannot, and I campaigned actively in France. There could be other reasons that may or may not be common to a number of people, but the matter of symbols was not one of them.

Of course, I feel Spanish because I am European and European because I am Spanish. This means that when I see my country's flag next to that of the 12 stars, the conviction that both are part of my life grows stronger. When I see the President-in-Office of the Council appear with both the French flag and the European Union flag, I also feel proud.

Above all, I feel proud to have been cheered, like many of you, when someone has received humanitarian aid or has noticed our election observation team and recognises us by the flag and applauds it. We would be foolish to deny ourselves what others recognise with friendship and with joy.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 11 a.m.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE), in writing. – The European Union is without any doubt at a crossroads in its evolution, when it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge the need to move forward by tackling all the current complex issues that potentially could stalemate the dynamics of the European integration process. In this process, the European symbols are a crucial linking element for developing a positive identity at European level, complementary to and not replacing well-established national identities.

The absence of the European symbols in the rejected Lisbon Treaty was most regrettable from the point of view of the critical democratic deficit currently confronting the European Union. The claim that their inclusion in the Lisbon Treaty would be inappropriate turned out to be profoundly unrealistic for there is no doubt that they would not pose any peril to the concepts on which the EU was built.

Thus, in order to increase the popular support for and commitment to the European Union in the forthcoming years, it is imperative to maintain and adjust these symbolic elements, so as to bind the European institutions and decision-making processes to acknowledgement of the 'demos' factor.

Glyn Ford (PSE). - *in writing.* - I support the introduction in the Rules of an official recognition of our European flag, the European anthem *Ode to Joy*, a European Day on 9 May and the motto of 'Unity in Diversity'. This support does not diminish my commitment and loyalty to my own country, England, where I was born, brought up, educated and now live.

I reject the view that one has to choose to exclusively give one's loyalty to one region. I am proud to be from the Forest of Dean, to be English and European.

Genowefa Grabowska (PSE), *in writing.* - (PL) Symbols do indeed generate an emotional attachment to an organisation or country dear to us. As we gaze at flags or mottos, listen to anthems and even as we handle coins, we identify directly with a particular country or organisation. The European Union does of course also have symbols of this nature facilitating identification and emotional attachment.

The blue flag with 12 golden stars, the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Europe Day celebrated on 9 May and the euro, which is the official currency of 15 Member States, are established, familiar and generally accepted symbols. Initially they were symbols of the Communities, and they have now become symbols of the European Union. Taken together with the Union's slogan or motto, namely 'United in Diversity', these symbols encapsulate the essence of the European project.

As a member of the Convention, I very much regret that the Union symbols described in the European Constitution never came into being. They were perceived as features of a pseudo-state and therefore deleted from the text of the Lisbon Treaty. Even so, however, I believe that they have not lost any of their character or their appeal to European citizens. These symbols continue to be vehicles of the values on which the European Union is based. They are an expression of the feeling of community felt by its citizens.

It is right, therefore, that the move to use the European symbols should have arisen precisely in the European Parliament.

4. Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013 (debate)

President. - The next item is the report (A6-0350/2008) by Alojz Peterle, on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on the White Paper entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013' (2008/2115(INI)).

Alojz Peterle, rapporteur. - (SL) This report concerns everyone – the sick and the healthy. Health is one of the key social and political issues on which the future of the European Union hangs. The importance of health to the economy is clearly stated in the Lisbon Strategy. Health is one of the most important assets of human life. Due to worrying health trends, especially the rise in cancer cases, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, and despite the improvements in curative medicine, this asset is under increasing threat. In addition, there are new challenges such as ageing population, climate change, rising food prices and globalisation.

There has been talk of pandemics and bioterrorism. On the one hand the World Health Organization has forecast an epidemic rise in cancer cases in future years, and on the other there are ever-stronger demands for patients and medical workers to have freedom of movement. Health systems and their financing are coming under increasing pressure. In recent years the cost of medicines has been rising faster than overall health costs, giving rise to public concern about equality of healthcare and the sustainability of health systems.

Citizens are worried that there will not be sufficient healthcare for all. They are not interested in debates about competences; they are primarily interested in the best way to be healthy. They are also concerned about equality of healthcare, which is considerable among the Member States, as also within the countries themselves. As far as cancer is concerned, differences in survival rates between the new and old Member States are such that we could justifiably talk of an iron curtain in health. All this is a reason for health to be afforded greater importance in the European political agenda. We are not talking about Any Other Business but about Survival. That is why we need a common strategic approach.

At the end of 2007 the European Commission adopted a health strategy entitled 'Together for Health'. This strategy is a product of the commitment by the Member States and the Union to respect the common values

and principles of health policy when ensuring the conditions for realising citizens' rights and responsibilities in their personal healthcare throughout their life, in their active involvement in decision-making and the adjustment of healthcare to patients' needs, in reducing inequalities in healthcare among different social groups, Member States and the regions within them, in understanding the investment in healthcare as a condition of economic development, and in the consistent inclusion of health in policies at all levels.

It is clear that the health sector really needs a long-term strategic and comprehensive approach, which will require all the main actors in the Member States and at European Union level to work in cooperation. If we want to improve cooperation we need to determine which forms of interinstitutional cooperation can enhance the effectiveness of our joint efforts.

We need a key strategic shift in the area of disease prevention. Although the importance of preventing disease has been highlighted for many years, only 3% of the health budgets of the Member States is devoted to that purpose. At the same time we know that it is precisely a prevention policy that would help us to achieve much better results. Forty percent of diseases are linked to unhealthy lifestyles, and a third of cancers are also preventable. One of the main messages in this report is the call on the Commission to prepare an ambitious plan of preventive measures for the entire five-year period.

I would like to thank the shadow rapporteurs, the Commission and everyone who contributed to the consensus opinion on what needs to be done to improve health.

Charlie McCreevy, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I am taking this debate on behalf of my colleague, Commissioner Vassiliou.

I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Peterle, for this report, and Members of Parliament for their interest in the white paper putting forward an EU health strategy.

I am delighted that Parliament supports the health objectives and principles of the white paper.

The Commission welcomes this report, and fully agrees with the key issues it raises, in particular the need to address health inequalities, to focus on promoting health by encouraging healthy lifestyles and to help prevent diseases.

I am pleased to say that these issues are at the very top of the Commission's health agenda.

Health inequalities between different regions in the EU and between different socioeconomic groups are a growing concern, and the Commission plans to bring forward action later next year to help bridge the health gap across the EU.

The Commission fully shares your views about the need to promote healthy lifestyles, in particular as regards nutrition. We all agree that this requires action targeted at citizens of all ages, in schools, the workplace and other settings.

This is a key component of the health strategy, and initiatives will be developed in the next couple of years. In the mean time, we are actively pursuing our strategies on nutrition, overweight and obesity and on alcohol-related harm.

The Commission also fully agrees with Parliament about the need to step up our efforts to prevent diseases.

In addition to encouraging healthy lifestyles, we share your views about the need to support effective screening to detect diseases, in particular cancer, at an early stage, and to foster greater exchange of best practice.

The Commission is actively supporting the implementation of the Council recommendation on cancer screening and has recently updated the EU guidelines on breast and cervical cancer. But we need to do more to help health systems fight cancer.

I am pleased to announce that the Commission plans to launch an EU platform for action on cancer next year to help Member States exchange knowledge and good practice in the prevention and treatment of cancer.

The Commission welcomes Parliament's emphasis on the role that a healthy workforce plays in delivering the Lisbon agenda.

Now let me comment on a few additional issues that the report raises.

Parliament calls for the establishment of European centres of reference. These would be leading centres of expertise in particular conditions, such as rare diseases, that require a combination of expertise and resources that many Member States do not have.

The Commission will build on the principles agreed between Member States for such centres and will continue work to promote such centres in the framework of the future directive on patients' rights in cross-border health care.

Parliament also underlines the need for effective measures to tackle the rising problem of resistance to antibiotics. The Commission shares this concern and is actively supporting Member States in implementing the Council recommendation on anti-microbial resistance. We will present a report on this next year.

Finally, the Commission endorses the views expressed about the need for health and social policies to work closely together. Mainstreaming health concerns in other policies is indeed a key principle of our strategy, and we are currently exploring synergies on a wide range of issues between these two policy areas.

In conclusion, the Commission and Parliament share the same vision about the key health issues that we need to address.

The time has now come to take forward work on the strategy and translate words into action.

The Commission will work closely with Parliament, the Council, the Member States and civil society in transforming the strategy objectives into better health for all across the European Union.

So I thank you for your support and I look forward to hearing your views.

Milan Cabrnoch, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*. – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, health, alongside our freedom, is the most important thing for the majority of us. Health is a prerequisite for a happy life and for a successful society. It is necessary to constantly repeat and emphasise that caring for our own health and for the health of those who are close to us is a personal responsibility of each one of us. Health is the result of our genetic heritage, of the lifestyle and environment in which we live. Our upbringing, acquired habits, nutrition, exercise, working environment and housing all influence our health. The influence of healthcare on health comes last in this list.

The Community is quite rightly responsible for the protection of public health. However, health services and the way in which they are organised, their quality and their funding are the complete responsibility of the EU Member States. Our common goal is to ensure the quality, safety and wide accessibility of health care for all those who need it. Each country seeks out its own way of providing the best possible healthcare services to its citizens in this difficult environment. The European Union has added value: the diversity of these independent systems, the opportunity to share in the successes and avoid the mistakes made by our friends.

Healthcare is a very broad issue, as highlighted by those who spoke before me. Consequently, I personally regret that here in the European Parliament it is not clear who in our midst really deals with health and healthcare. One day we see healthcare as an internal market service, the next day as a social security issue, and on yet another occasion as a public health issue. I would like to call on the President and on each one of us, on this occasion when we are debating this important document, to consider the possibility of establishing a European Parliament Committee on Health during the next parliamentary term.

Siiri Oviir, *draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*. – (ET) Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, health is one of the most important resources for every person. The European Union's healthcare strategy for the 21st century should guarantee a high level of uniform health protection available to all throughout Europe. Unfortunately the health systems of the Member States today differ widely and uniform and effective action on health is not guaranteed throughout Europe for citizens.

I am pleased to welcome the European Commission White Paper on healthcare strategy although, like the rapporteur, I am of the view that the White Paper does not set specific quantifiable and measurable objectives whose attainment could and should produce tangible results.

Healthcare requires effective political support in all areas and at all levels. Hence my appeal to the Commission that in future it should integrate public health issues into all EU policy areas and in that regard it should not forget gender mainstreaming in an enhanced healthcare policy.

I thank the rapporteur for his work and you for your attention.

Françoise Grossetête, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, we are currently discussing this White Paper on health for 2008-2013, and health is of course a fundamental right for us all.

We have a series of challenges to face: cancer, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes and, above all, the ageing of the population, not to mention the constant threat of pandemics. Our fellow citizens expect a great deal from us when it comes to these health issues: when we talk about the value added of the European Union, it is in these areas where they are severely affected and where their expectations of us are highest!

Unfortunately, this White Paper is pathetically trivial and offers nothing that is in any way concrete. Fortunately, our colleague Mr Peterle has vastly improved its content. Perhaps repetition is indeed necessary: on numerous occasions in this House we have talked about these health issues and we are all in favour of health for all and health of a high standard through an integrated approach. Investing in prevention is important. We want it but we are not doing it because we are constantly coming up against overly timid budgets, notably when it comes to research. We have not yet realised that prevention would cost a great deal less than a cure.

It is essential to take into account the ageing of the population and its consequent effects on society: economic effects, social effects and health effects. However, we need to ensure that there is less talk and more action: it is vital that we respond to our citizens' expectations. There are very clear messages that must concentrate on good practices: the need for physical activity, a balanced diet and, above all, responsibility: responsibility on the part of the EU Member States but also responsibility on the part of each European citizen.

Glenis Willmott, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – Mr President, my political group supports the Commission's white paper on the health strategy. In particular we support the focus on prevention, education and encouraging healthier lifestyles. Planning to protect our citizens from health threats and pandemics, and aiming to reduce health inequalities across the EU, are very important.

We need new guidelines on cancer screening, a directive on organ donation, improved surveillance mechanisms to respond to health threats and improved exchange of best practice. But, with regard to e-health, I should sound a note of caution. This is an area where we need to draw up precise rules defining a clear framework. It should be clear that it should not exclude those who are not Internet-literate, and should not replace a visit to consult the doctor. This said, I can see many advantages, but we must also be aware of the potential perils.

However, what health policy also needs at EU level is clear focus. In my work as shadow rapporteur on this report, I have detected a real sense that there are too many different working groups and work streams, expert groups and task forces, many of which have been set up as presidencies' pet projects, or because of pressures from members of this House or from other interest groups.

I believe the EU has a lot of value to add in the field of health, but that resources should be properly focused and provide value for money.

I would urge colleagues to vote for my Amendment 2 calling for the Commission to launch a review of current work streams. I would also urge colleagues to support my amendments on protecting our citizens' health from dangers at work. I would like to ask the Commission to respond in particular to my Amendments 1 and 6 regarding exposure to substances toxic for reproduction.

In the forthcoming proposals for review of the Carcinogens Directive, it is vital that substances toxic for reproduction are included. I understand that the Commission has made a U-turn on this, and would be grateful if the Commission would explain its position.

Marios Matsakis, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, everybody agrees that health is one of the most precious values for our citizens, yet, as we all know, under Article 152 of the Amsterdam Treaty, health falls exclusively within the competence of the Member States. This obvious antithesis is not just a strange peculiarity in EU law; it is, in practice, highly obstructive to our endeavours to achieve optimal health goals within the EU, and one wonders why this situation has been allowed to proceed unchanged for such a long time. The reason, of course, is a financial one. Health care is very costly, and improving it to the extent of achieving the desired equality across the EU would mean large increases in health costs for some EU Member States.

So we can all come to this Parliament and criticise the shameful differences in life expectancy, in infant mortality rates and cancer survival from rich to poor Member States, but most of us fail to point the blame where it should lie, on the EU's inability to secure the provision of financial assistance to poorer members

in order to help them catch up in terms of the level of health care, and thus stop their governments from opposing the possibility of removing health from the sole province of national competence.

This, one could argue, is a sad reflection on the fundamental values we uphold in the EU in practice, whereby we accord greater importance in terms of competence to internal market rules for our businesses, for example, than to health care for our citizens.

My position is that the time has come for an urgent change to Article 152 of the Amsterdam Treaty and this can only be achieved by a concerted effort by the Council, the Commission and Parliament.

As parliamentarians, we should do our utmost to bring about the required change. That having been said, the most important aspect of health strategy in practical terms is, of course, disease prevention. Everybody knows that smoking, obesity, alcohol, drugs, high sugar intake and a stressful, unhealthy lifestyle in general are our health's greatest enemies, but are we doing enough to free our citizens from these curses? Not really.

Let us take smoking, for example. How can we claim to be doing everything we can to prevent people from smoking when we still subsidise tobacco-growing in the EU, we still allow tax-free cigarette sales on planes and ships travelling to and from the EU, we still have a relatively low tax on tobacco considering the enormous health cost of cigarette smokers, we still have indirect tobacco ads on our TV screens, and we still have laws relating to smoking which have hardly been fully implemented in the EU?

I do not have time to say much more about prevention, but I think the main point of what I am saying is the need to change the competence rule relating to health.

IN THE CHAIR: MR BIELAN

Vice-President

Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, *on behalf of the UEN Group*. – (PL) Mr President, I should like to thank the rapporteur for his work. It is absolutely right for us to deal with this important subject today, following up the strategic document prepared by the Commission last year.

The importance of prevention, proper nutrition, air and drinking water quality, a healthy lifestyle, early detection of diseases and potential swift treatment of the latter should all be emphasised. It has been noted that currently major differences exist between individual countries and different social groups regarding access to healthcare. This indicates a clear lack of social cohesion. Such inequalities are also manifest in terms of survival rates for cancer, cardiovascular diseases and other conditions. There is a worrying increase in the number of mentally ill persons. Treatment methods used leave much to be desired, too. I have in mind in particular the over-use of antibiotics and steroids.

Healthcare systems are also cause for concern, as they often prove inadequate. We all appreciate how precious our health is, and know that our biological life is limited. In this context, I would remind the House that the Polish poet Alexander Fredra advised his readers not to neglect their well-being, because to do so would endanger not only their health but their very lives.

Adamos Adamou, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (EL) Mr President, let me express my thanks to Mr Peterle for his attempt to add some additional policies and actions to the Community strategy on health. He has aimed at promoting equal access to an integrated health system as a basic, inalienable right of every citizen.

We must therefore work hard to make the organisations concerned politically aware of the principle that as far as health is concerned, funding is equivalent to investment. At this point, let me add that I agree with Mr Matsakis's position. We should concentrate on disease prevention through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the provision of optimum treatment, as well as on investment in new technologies and research.

Our goal must be a cross-sector policy to be coordinated at various levels. It will aim to meet the key challenges of an ageing population and the huge inequalities affecting the health systems of the Member States.

Irena Belohorská (NI). – (SK) When we talk about the European Union's common approach to health, our first consideration must be consolidating standards for the provision of healthcare services. The European Union's goal must be to eliminate the disparities between the new and old Member States, which are still quite significant.

Since the individual Member States have different goals in the area of health policy, the health sector across the European Union needs long-term and strategic cooperation so that consensus can be reached. It is also

necessary to invest in prevention and public education programmes. Better results can be achieved with a prevention policy and it is well known that almost half of all diseases are linked to unhealthy lifestyles.

I agree with Mr Peterle's request to the Commission to draw up a long-term plan for preventive actions for the above reason. This could help to improve the European population's state of health. Research in medical areas also contributes to prevention and makes diseases easier to cure. For example, the European Union does not invest enough funds in cancer research: EU investment is almost one fifth of what the US invests. Rectifying this shortcoming would be in the interest of all European citizens.

A useful idea in terms of raising patient awareness is the establishment of information and guidance centres to help patients, the healthcare personnel and the entire health sector. Once these goals are met, the European Union will be much closer to achieving a common approach to health.

Bogusław Sonik (PPE-DE). - (PL) Mr President, I wholeheartedly support the report by Mr Peterle on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, entitled 'Together for Health: a Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. In particular, I welcome this report because it deals with one of the most urgent challenges facing the European Union and the entire world. It should be highlighted that this is the first strategic programme presenting a comprehensive Union approach to health policy. It lays down the values adopted by the Community and the aims it is setting itself in this area. It amounts to a Union healthcare strategy that stands out against other health systems, and could indeed serve as an example for the latter.

I am glad to hear that the strategy has been positively received in the Member States. I am also glad to learn that certain countries have already taken action with a view to developing a common standpoint and incorporating the strategy into their national health plans. Slovenia is but one example. Action of this nature has also been taken in Poland.

The financing of healthcare services makes a significant contribution to the budget deficit in many countries of the European Union. It is essential to take this fact into account when considering health strategy. Accordingly, I believe that the strategic plan should be considered in conjunction with methods of financing public healthcare in the Member States.

I should also like to mention an issue that we have previously debated. I am referring to new information technologies and their effect on children and young people. Unregulated use of the Internet and computer games, addiction and related conditions are becoming increasingly serious problems for our society and civilisation. Children and young people are the worst affected. The Commission and the European Council are currently developing a sound method of cooperating in the healthcare area and it would be right for us to be involved in the implementation of this project.

Anne Ferreira (PSE). - (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, rapporteur, ladies and gentlemen, I would first of all like to congratulate the rapporteur on his work, which has improved on the initial text.

This White Paper proposed by the Commission is a first step in setting clear and beneficial objectives in the field of health, but it is unfortunate that it does not respond to the challenges of quality healthcare and equal access. The report on the table today has not taken over the initial proposals concerning self-medication and that is a good thing. In my opinion, trivialising or even encouraging self-medication is totally inappropriate in terms of the healthcare we must strive towards. 'Together for Health' must not become 'every man for himself in times of illness'.

The introduction of the idea of an active patient is a worrying concept: because it is not accompanied by a clear definition, the door is left open to different interpretations. Encouraging patients to take responsibility for their own care and urging population groups to provide their own responses to certain health needs are further proposals that must be treated carefully. We must remember that health is a very specific field that requires a very high level of competence and the issues involved can often be a matter of life and death. The proposals encouraging self-medication, in conjunction with the concept of individual responsibility, do not seem to respond to the health challenge we have to tackle and they move away from the concepts of solidarity.

There is one other point that I must criticise: facilitating the mobility of health professionals. This could have very serious consequences on the territorial distribution of health personnel and aggravate what are already very precarious situations in certain Member States. Rather than encouraging the mobility of health professionals, it would be preferable to put the emphasis on the exchange of good health practices among all the Member States. I also recognise that web-based health resources must be encouraged. This is a positive and innovative initiative that is nevertheless only available to a minority of people.

I naturally support the amendments tabled by my colleagues concerning health in the workplace. This is a crucial topic because work-related health problems are becoming more and more common.

Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk (UEN). - (PL) Mr President, I should like to draw attention to three issues in this debate. Firstly, there are notable health inequalities between the old and the new Member States. The cumulative effect of these inequalities is manifested in significant differences in terms of life expectancy. This can vary by 9 years for women and by as much as 13 years for men. We should strive to achieve a substantial reduction of these differences.

Secondly, a substantial increase in investment aimed at disease prevention is needed. To date, barely 3% of investment is allocated to this purpose. It is well known, however, that up to 40% of diseases are linked to an unhealthy lifestyle and could largely be effectively prevented.

Thirdly, as obesity is becoming an increasingly serious disease of our civilisation, it is essential to promote a healthy lifestyle. Favourable terms should also be made available for healthy organic food produced without the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. This type of farming is not very cost-effective, however. It therefore requires increased financial support within the framework of the common agricultural system.

Urszula Krupa (IND/DEM). - (PL) Mr President, many important issues relating to health and healthcare are raised in the document under discussion. General access to healthcare is guaranteed in the constitutions of individual Member States. Respect for the competences of the Member States in the area of healthcare and freedom of choice of health services are positive features. Nonetheless, I should like to draw attention to the danger threatening my fellow citizens because of the Polish Government's current plans to transform all healthcare entities into commercial profit-making companies.

The proposed reforms transcend the limits of freedom to make an individual choice of healthcare system. They threaten fundamental human rights such as the right to life and healthcare. The scale of the threat should make it incumbent upon the European Commission to establish guidelines preventing public authorities from relinquishing control of public hospitals privatised against the wishes of Polish society and of the President of the Republic of Poland.

Avril Doyle (PPE-DE). - Mr President, I would like to thank the rapporteur for his well-prepared response to the Commission.

We are all aware that it is Member States' individual responsibility to decide on the organisation and delivery of their health services and medical care. However, this should not mean that they neglect serious health cooperation at EU level. There are a wide range of health issues, such as the prevention of pandemics and the movement of patients or health professionals, where Member States cannot act effectively in isolation and where action at EU level is necessary.

EU action can be valuable in creating pan-European networks of expertise which permit exchange of best practice in fields such as e-health, nanotechnology, rare disease treatments or centres of excellence.

The EU, in partnership with Member States, has made important progress in protecting health, for example in the area of legislating on tobacco advertising, in the area of blood products, and indeed in the launch of the European Centre for Disease Control.

We need to strengthen action to reduce health inequities across the EU-27, in particular through exchange of best practice and through better public information on citizens' cross-border health-care rights. We need to legislate in this area quickly, and not let ECJ judgments be the patients' sole guide around Europe. We need to respond with proper legislation. Furthermore, comprehensive health impact assessments and evaluation on all legislation across the board should be carried out, in order to provide a platform for joined-up thinking and better enable decision-makers to assess the real cost to human health of any policy initiative.

This should be done in the same way that environmental impact assessments are now taken for granted as a way of informing legislators, and are a prerequisite for the formulation of most EU policies. Even with the backdrop of the economic and financial crisis today, health is our ultimate wealth.

Åsa Westlund (PSE). - (SV) Mr President, I wanted to speak about two things. The first is how we must deal with excessive antibiotics prescription, which is handled very well in the report.

We need only look at ourselves here in the European Parliament, or I need only look at myself. I would probably not be standing here today if we did not have effective antibiotics. I have been ill a number of times

and just like many of you here in this Chamber, I am sure, have been saved by antibiotics. Unfortunately, our children's chances of getting this kind of help in the future are being jeopardised because we allow doctors to prescribe antibiotics when they are not needed and even sell antibiotics without a prescription.

We need means of control and incentives to stop doctors meeting with patients to make money, so that they do not prescribe antibiotics when they are not necessary. I believe that the EU has an extremely important role to play here, to disseminate different ways of working successfully to combat this kind of excessive prescription.

The second question which I wanted to address concerns inequality in health, which has also been raised by several earlier speakers. There is another aspect of inequality in health. It is not just a matter of inequality between countries. There is also inequality within countries. The WHO organised a special commission which looked at class differences in health. It boldly stated that 'social justice is a matter of life and death' and this is something which we must discuss openly in the Union.

It is completely unacceptable that there are such big differences within countries. There are good examples where class differences in health have been successfully overcome, but there are also very bad examples. I myself am very concerned at what is happening in the capital of my own country. A system has suddenly been introduced there as a result of which doctors are moving away from socially deprived and poor areas, where medical care is most needed, to areas where people are healthiest and most wealthy.

I believe that the EU should collect statistics and information so that voters, and also those who take decisions on health care, can be given clear advice on what measures lead to greater social justice in health and which do not.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (PSE). - (RO) To respond the major challenges that the health sector is facing in the European Union, we need action plans which should include promoting a better state of health, public education and disease prevention programmes, especially for those diseases related to food, obesity, alcohol and drug consumption and smoking.

Early detection and diagnosis, as well as the supply of proper treatment for chronic diseases, especially cancer, will ensure quality of life for people who are affected by these illnesses. This is why the exchange of best practices in all medical assistance fields within the European Union will contribute to increasing citizen welfare and health. I believe it is important to promote a healthy lifestyle inside families, in schools and at work in order to set the path for a healthy life model and to promote healthy ageing, both for the current generation and future ones.

We must be especially concerned about our children's interests, developing provisions concerning maternity and parental leave, taking into consideration the effect the presence of parents has on a child's physical and mental development. It is just as important to improve the medical care system for pregnant women and to inform them about the effects of smoking and drinking.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE). - (LT) I would like to compliment the rapporteur and also point out that the only way for us to tackle the challenges of the 21st century is to improve public health. The saying 'all the medicine in the world cannot replace exercise, but exercise can replace all the medicine in the world' is timeless. We should not simply preach healthy living and healthy nutrition. The time has come to encourage people who are not consciously ruining their health but rather strengthening it through various means, including financial. Recommendations from the European Commission on this subject would be of great value. An acute problem for the new Member States is the lack of specialists. In some places half of all newly qualified doctors seek employment in other EU Member States, where salaries are much higher. That way the new Member States are supporting and strengthening the health services of their richer neighbours. I am not suggesting any restrictions on the free movement of citizens. However, a solidarity and compensation fund is necessary for the abatement of the consequences of this loss of specialists.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). - (PL) Mr President, matters relating to health fall within the competence of individual Member States. This should not, however, represent an obstacle when it comes to taking joint action aimed at protecting the health of Europeans. The key objectives are laid down in the White Paper. They include promoting health in an ageing Europe, protecting citizens against dangers to their health and supporting dynamic health systems. These objectives cannot be achieved without substantial involvement by local and regional authorities.

The latter must therefore be fully involved in implementation of this strategy. The White Paper raises the important issue of health inequalities and of the variations in health levels between individual countries and social groups. The provision of certain healthcare services in most of the new Member States is low. This gap must be bridged. It is therefore necessary to strengthen action aimed at doing away with inequality and to make this a priority objective.

Another task identified in the White Paper relates to the need to emphasise and enhance the importance of programmes involving health awareness, notably those concerning nutrition. Sound nutrition and a healthy lifestyle can prevent many chronic diseases. That is why educational programmes on how to watch one's diet and engage in physical activity from a very early age are so very important.

Charlie McCreevy, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I thank the honourable Members for their contributions and I will deal with some of the points raised by them.

Mrs Oviir and Mrs Grossetête said that the white paper was too general. But the aim of the white paper is to set up a number of general principles and objectives to guide Community health action for the years to come. It would be very difficult to set quantifiable targets on such broad and general objectives and on such a wide range of issues.

The Commission does fully agree that quantifiable targets are a good means to drive change and to achieve results. We feel, however, that it is better to consider such targets within each individual policy initiative in the framework of the strategy.

A number of speakers referred to inequalities in health, for example Mr Janowski, Mr Adamou, Mrs Belohorská, Mrs Doyle, Mr Kuźmiuk and Mrs Westlund. We fully agree with the concerns raised and with the need to help to bridge the health gap. The Commission will be presenting a communication next year but, in the mean time, we will help to channel structural funds for health.

Mrs Willmott asked a number of questions. She made the point that there are too many work streams in health. But this is the reason why the EU health strategy adopted in 2007 aims to bring together, under a coherent framework, all policies that impact on health. The Commission is looking at the different structures in the health sector to achieve synergies between structures and to ensure that work is done in an efficient and an effective manner without duplication.

Mrs Willmott also asked about the Carcinogens Directive. The Commission has consulted the social partners on the possible revision of the 2004 directive in this area and is currently commissioning a study to be concluded in early 2010 on the options for amending this directive. The results of this study will enable the Commission to decide on an appropriate way forward. EU legislation on health and safety at work, specifically the 1998 directive on all chemical agents, already covers protection at work against all chemicals, including those with a toxic effect on reproduction.

Mrs Westlund raised the issue of antibiotic resistance. The Commission is working closely with the ECDC. The ECDC work plan for 2008 includes antimicrobial resistance among its priority actions. In addition it plans to organise, on an annual basis, an EU Antibiotic Awareness Day. This event is aimed at strengthening public perception and knowledge of issues relating to all antimicrobial resistance. The first Awareness Day will take place on 18 November 2008. We are also collaborating closely with the ECDC on the preparation of a second report on Member States' implementation of the Council recommendation of 2002.

In conclusion I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Peterle, and all Members for their support for the health strategy that we have developed.

Alojz Peterle, *rapporteur*. – (SL) Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my sincere thanks for this rich and complex debate. I am pleased that almost all your contributions contained three key words: the first is 'together', the second is 'inequality' and the third is 'prevention'. 'Together' means more cooperation at Member State level, as well as European Union level, more partnerships, including the regional and local communities, and more complementarity. I agree with all those who said that the competence of the Member States must not be an excuse for not doing jointly what the individual countries cannot do, and there are an increasing number of such challenges.

The fact that there are so many inequalities, which we have been warning about, means that there is a lack of knowledge sharing. If the chance of surviving cancer is 10% lower in one place than another, it means that information and knowledge have not reached that place, even though it is available to others, including

neighbouring countries. Here we have to achieve some kind of dynamics based on already available knowledge. The principal message and advice should be that we should use available knowledge and share good practice.

As regards dynamics, I would like to add that diseases spread rapidly, which is why we also require political dynamics and political innovation. As regards the White Paper, I would like to say that it is a very good framework for what we aim to do. Its purpose is not to address all the specific issues addressed in other documents and other resolutions. It should give a framework, and, as someone said, we now have for the first time a comprehensive framework for the values, indicators, strategies and measures. This is the basis on which we can move forward.

In conclusion I would like to add that I have particular difficulty with the amendments proposed by the Socialist Group. They proposed six amendments which were rejected by ENVI. I find it difficult to overrule the arguments which ENVI used to express a different viewpoint. I cannot support those amendments now, because this is a plenary session and this topic was covered by other resolutions. If these amendments are approved, we will have an unbalanced picture, because other categories of the population will not be treated with such attention. It is not only about workers but pensioners too, and schoolchildren. I insist, of course, on the arguments I gave at the ENVI meeting.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 11 a.m.

Written statements (Rule 142)

Iles Braghetto (PPE-DE), in writing. – (IT) Health is something that has a cost but has no price. Investment in health is the most effective and efficient investment there can be for a society tailored to people's needs. This investment is a joint responsibility on the part of individuals who must adopt healthy lifestyles by behaving responsibly, healthcare staff who must abide by their code of professional ethics, and national and regional governments, which must pay particular attention to the sustainability of health systems.

Careful attention must furthermore be paid to the need for integrated social and health policies catering adequately for new requirements. Overcoming inequality, coping with exacting health demands, keeping up with the epidemiological changes underway and ensuring ever more active cooperation among Member States and regions: all of these requirements are duly addressed in the report by Mr Peterle, whom I wish to thank for his excellent work.

Corina Crețu (PSE), in writing. – (RO) It is encouraging to see that the European Parliament adopted the Resolution concerning the European Commission's White Paper "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013". Beyond the provisions concerning the health-related strategy, I noticed a weak point in the paper: the absence of quantifiable objectives aimed at ensuring an increased efficiency.

As a representative of a country whose medical system is of very poor quality, which is reflected in the population's worrying state of health, I would like to stress the importance of putting words into practice but also the need to show greater solidarity at European Union level in order to offer all citizens decent medical care services.

Romania has numerous sad tales to tell in relation to health. It is the EU country with the highest number of tuberculosis patients and it is in the penultimate place when it comes to the quality of diabetes treatment although diabetes is the disease with the highest predisposition. One in ten Romanians suffers from hepatic disorders. A quarter of Romanian children have health issues. Cancer-related mortality has increased worryingly in comparison to the rest of the EU. The mortality rate for cardiovascular causes is 61% of the total number of deaths while in the EU it is 37%. Romania is the European champion when it comes to delivered prescriptions, hospital admissions and surgical interventions but it is also the country with the shortest life expectancy in the EU.

Gyula Hegyi (PSE), in writing. – (HU) Allergy is the endemic disease of our time. It has marched steadily across Europe since the Second World War. A third of our children have an allergy, and if we do not take action, pretty soon a half of the population of Europe will suffer from one allergy or another. The causes of these allergies are chemically treated foods and polluted environments. The symptoms of allergy are triggered by chemicals, natural and artificial food additives, spices, pollen and other natural substances, and animal hair. In Hungary, ragweed is a particular problem.

Unfortunately the European Union has no allergy strategy at present, as the Commission confirmed in response to my question. Allergy sufferer associations within civil society, and millions of affected European citizens, are counting on the introduction of allergy legislation at European level. Let us do something to help prevent allergies, to tackle the main causes and to safeguard those who suffer from allergies. Active engagement would underpin our focus on the health of the citizens of the European Union and their everyday concerns.

Tunne Kelam (PPE-DE), in writing. – I would like to draw attention to the worrying tendency in Europe, where more and more young people suffer from mental problems. Many young people in Europe suffer from stress; indicators of substance abuse, especially alcohol and drugs, are increasing. These aspects, separately and combined, can lead to serious mental disorders.

Recent tragedies in Finland indicate that more than ever Member States need to pay attention to young people in providing measures for preventing bad health, especially mental health.

A holistic and proactive approach to dealing with the roots of mental problems and illnesses is crucial. A safe living environment (preventing domestic violence and substance abuse), reducing stress-causing factors in school and at home, prevention and awareness-raising should be of the highest priority. No school can replace a caring family where parents see their responsibility in teaching their children the basics of social and ethical values.

It is important to include all actors in society to achieve the set goals. Various voluntary and youth organisations in particular are crucial providers of a safe environment in leisure-time activities and of non-formal education/awareness-raising on mental-health-related issues.

Therefore I call for a holistic and proactive approach including guaranteeing better mental health and therefore a better future for young people.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I salute the fact that the Peterle Report approaches and emphasises the urgent need to take active measures to recruit and retain health professionals.

According to the World Health Organisation, the migration of 2% of the physicians from a country should be a code red signal for the authorities. In Romania, 4% of Romanian physicians requested papers to leave and work abroad and the same percentage was registered in 2007 as well. Therefore, not only did we cross the level considered to be a code red threshold, but we also reached double that percentage. From the beginning of the year up until 1 September 2008, 957 persons asked the Romanian Physicians' College (CMR) for moral integrity certificates which will allow them to work abroad.

It is obvious that a health system cannot function without physicians. I believe that this is a worrying phenomenon not just for Romania but for all of Europe and the absence of qualified individuals who can treat European patients must preoccupy the Member States and the Union to the highest degree.

Péter Olajos (PPE-DE), in writing. – (HU) First, I would like to say how happy I am that we have recently seen more and more reports and strategies on the importance of health.

I myself as a 2009 Budget expert have tried to speak for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). My initiatives have been received favourably by both ENVI and the Committee on Budgets.

As Mr Peterle has pointed out, there is a close connection between the new health hazards and climate change. On 7 October, the Committee on Budgets adopted a research project I proposed, 'Comprehensive Research on Health, the Environment and Climate Change – Improvement in Inside and Outside Air Quality'. This 4-million-euro initiative will be managed by the Hungarian headquarters of the Regional Environmental Centre for central and eastern Europe (REC) and will cover nine countries (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia and Slovakia). At the same time the project will examine the links between health, environmental protection, transport and climate change and their effects in schools.

As regards ECDC ratification, I also support the rapporteur. So that the Agency can meet its increased responsibilities, I suggested releasing it from the margin set by the Commission. ENVI adopted this unanimously, and it is to be hoped that at the end of the October plenary Parliament will decide on this too.

Bogusław Rogalski (UEN), in writing. – (PL) Health is one of the greatest blessings a human being can enjoy in life. Unfortunately, worrying trends such as an increase in the number of cases of cancer, cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes are making us aware of the extent to which health is now endangered. We are confronted with the challenges of climate change, globalisation, the ageing population, along with the threat of pandemics and biological terrorism.

The marked rise in the cost of medicines in recent years is also cause for concern. It has meant that many EU citizens simply cannot afford medicines. In addition, the healthcare systems of certain EU Member States need to undergo radical reform in order to eliminate tremendous inequalities. For example, there is a difference of 9 years in the life expectancy of women and 13 years for men.

Investing in healthcare policies concerning the earliest years of a person's life should also be a priority issue. It is important, however, not to allow a situation to develop whereby preventing the birth of disabled children or children suffering from chronic diseases would be generally accepted. Aid for the parents of sick children should be promoted instead.

In addition, I should like to emphasise the need to respect the competences of the Member States in the area of healthcare and freedom of choice of medical services.

Clearly, health also has a bearing on the economy. Investment in healthcare should therefore not be perceived simply as an outlay, but also as an important element of investment in improving the quality of human capital and a key social and political issue.

Richard Seeber (PPE-DE), in writing. – (DE) In the interests of health protection, we must face up to the challenges identified. The main competence for maintaining and promoting health standards lies with the Member States. Nonetheless, there are many areas, especially as regards transnational problems, where it is our task to support the Member States as much as possible if they are unable to take effective action.

The major problem we face is the grave inequalities between the Member States, on the one hand, and within the individual Member States, on the other. Life expectancy in the 'old' Member States is on average 10 years higher than in the new Member States. Our task is to diffuse, across the Member States, the tried and tested procedures which have proved their worth. Through appropriate awareness-raising measures for citizens, the intention is to adapt and harmonise standards.

Health is a vital asset for all of us, and it is also a key economic factor. We must therefore do even more to curb the dramatic increase in the incidence of cancer, for example. For that to be achieved, it is essential to mainstream health in all policy areas and promote the development of new technologies and innovations.

Kathy Sinnott (IND/DEM), in writing. – I would like to take the opportunity to give particular welcome to certain provisions within the health strategy, notably the inclusion of autism spectrum disorders which are increasingly affecting children throughout Europe, and would like to mention the excellent research that is already being undertaken in this area, with the help of the Commission.

I commend the new focus on rare diseases, Alzheimer's, and research into mental illness and men's health, as well as the continued focus on recognised conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer.

I am glad to see carers mentioned as it is important to remember that medical conditions not only affect the sufferer but also those who love and care for them and hope that the mention translates into practical support for those at the coalface.

I also applaud the constructive focus on prevention, especially in the avoidance of alcohol and drug use during pregnancy.

Marian Złotea (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) Health is one of the most important values in a human's life. The worrying increase of the number of individuals who suffer from cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity in spite of the progress made with the cures for these diseases is an important issue to be dealt with. The problems linked to excessive weight and malnutrition, improper diet and HIV/AIDS are challenges that endanger the health of the European Union.

The differences between the new and the old EU Member States in the survival rates for cancer patients are so large that we can speak of an "iron curtain in the health sector". The European Union must consolidate its actions to reduce inequalities between the Member States, especially by exchanging best practices in different fields and by promoting public education for better medical care by supporting innovations in the

health systems, and it must also propose enforcement mechanisms for structured cooperation between EU institutions.

We must define fundamental health values, a system of EU health indicators and ways of reducing the inequalities which exist in the health sector. We must invest in health, we must adopt methods for promoting health at all ages, and we must adopt measures related to tobacco, food, alcohol and other factors affecting health.

(The sitting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.)

IN THE CHAIR: MR ONESTA

Vice-President

5. Approval of Minutes of previous sitting: see Minutes

6. Tribute

President. - Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of our President, Mr Pöttering, I must sadly inform you of the death of the former European Commissioner George Thomson, who later became Lord Thomson of Monifieth. Together with Lord Soames, he was one of the first two British Commissioners. A former minister George Thomson passed away last week at the age of 87.

7. Voting time

President. - The next item is voting time.

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

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Alain Hutchinson (PSE). - *(FR)* Mr President, excuse me, I am not sure under which Rule I should address the House but I would like to make a statement to the presidency about the current situation in Parliament: it is turning into a permanent circus, which makes it very difficult to work calmly when trying to do serious things here.

(Applause)

I think that this situation reached its peak yesterday evening and I would ask the presidency to take action in order to restore calm and a serious atmosphere in a House that should be an example to the whole world and that should be a serious House, not a circus.

(Applause)

President. - I imagine, Mr Hutchinson, that you are referring to the various displays in the passageways and corridors. You know that the Quaestors are responsible in this regard. We will of course pass on your comments.

Pervenche Berès (PSE). - *(FR)* Mr President, I would also like to make a comment about calm and order in our work. Our sitting yesterday afternoon was marked by an extremely moving account, but the disruption to the agenda meant that the speeches on topics as important as the financial crisis were postponed by more than two hours, totally interfering with the order of speakers. That does not help things to run smoothly in this House.

President. - In this case, I will pass on your comments not to the Quaestors but to the Conference of Presidents as that is the body responsible for such matters.

7.1. Communicating Europe in partnership (A6-0372/2008, Jo Leinen) (vote)

7.2. Protocol to the EC-Switzerland Agreement on the free movement of persons (participation of Bulgaria and Romania) (A6-0343/2008, Marian-Jean Marinescu) (vote)

Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE). - (DE) Mr President, could you please send for a technician? This voting machine is broken. It is completely destroyed. I did indeed vote before, and I would ask you to take note of that.

7.3. Establishment of the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) (A6-0360/2008, Luca Romagnoli) (vote)

7.4. Stepping up the fight against undeclared work (A6-0365/2008, Pier Antonio Panzeri) (vote)

7.5. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU (A6-0364/2008, Gabriele Zimmer) (vote)

7.6. Agreement EC-Ukraine in relation to preservation of commitments on trade in services (A6-0337/2008, Zbigniew Zaleski) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Zbigniew Zaleski, rapporteur. - (FR) Mr President, since the situation in Ukraine is quite serious, I would like to make a comment on this report. It is a purely economic report but we need a broader strategy which, following the example of Euromed, makes room for EURO-NEST, another union, which would be based in Lublin, Poland.

We must learn from the crisis in Georgia and ensure that we do not wake up one day outside the political stage, having allowed another actor to take our place.

To conclude, I would like to urge all my fellow Members to support this report in order to send a strong signal to the Ukrainians, who have Europe strongly in their sights and who now find themselves in an extremely difficult crisis.

7.7. IASCF: Review of the constitution – Public Accountability and the Composition of the IASB Proposals for Change (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

Elisa Ferreira (PSE). - (PT) I want to draw attention to the fact that there is a printing error in the voting list of the PSE Group. I would ask colleagues to follow the coordinator in terms of how they vote.

– *After the vote on paragraph 5:*

Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE). - Mr President, we have agreed between the groups that Amendment 4 by the ALDE Group does not fall even if Amendment 2 is adopted, because these are compatible amendments. So we should have voted also on Amendment 4. This change is made as an oral amendment, so if there is someone who objects to this, I can understand that, but we have agreed between the groups that Amendment 4 should also be accepted and should be voted on.

President. - I will not announce the result of the final vote until this minor problem is sorted out. I need clarification from the chairwoman of the committee responsible. According to our services, there is a problem with the introduction because the first amendment says 'regrets' while the other says 'expresses doubts'. Can you clarify this for us?

Pervenche Berès (PSE). - (FR) Mr President, I believe that Mrs Kauppi is mistaken because Amendment 4 by Mr Klinz relates to the same paragraph as Amendment 2 by Mrs Kauppi. As the House has voted on Amendment 2 by Mrs Kauppi, by definition Amendment 4 falls.

President. - (FR) I am pleased to see that the chairwoman of the committee responsible agrees with the analysis of the sittings services. Therefore, Mrs Kauppi, I am sorry but I cannot carry out your request.

7.8. Situation in Belarus (vote)

7.9. Suspension of the WTO Doha Round (vote)

7.10. Use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union (new Rule 202a) (A6-0347/2008, Carlos Carnero González) (vote)

7.11. Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union (A6-0362/2008, Richard Seeber) (vote)

7.12. Arctic Governance (vote)

– *Before the vote on Amendment 1:*

Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE). - Mr President, as an oral amendment I would like to propose that the protection of biodiversity in our amendment would be an addition to the original text of the paragraph. So, no deletion: just an addition.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment, but subsequently rejected the amended amendment)

– *Before the vote on recital D:*

Diana Wallis (ALDE). - Mr President, people should have details of this oral amendment. It is to make clear why the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is not sufficient on its own to deal with the Arctic. So it adds the words to Recital D: 'and which was not formulated with specific regard to the current circumstances of climate change and the unique consequences of melting ice in the Arctic Seas'.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

– *Before the vote on recital F:*

Diana Wallis (ALDE). - Mr President, it is exactly the same subject and it is to add to the words in Recital F: 'whereas the Arctic region is currently not governed by any specifically formulated multilateral norms and regulations'.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

7.13. Implementation of the social legislation relating to road transport (A6-0357/2008, Alejandro Cercas) (vote)

7.14. Lamfalussy follow up - Future Structure of Supervision (A6-0359/2008, Ieke van den Burg and Daniel Dăianu) (vote)

– *Before the vote on paragraph 2(c) of the Annex:*

Ieke van den Burg, co-rapporteur. - Mr President, in the light of topical developments we have strengthened the text in an oral amendment about the deposit guarantee schemes, and it reads 'the Lamfalussy Level 3 Committees can take decisions on the basis of a fair ...'. Sorry, I have the wrong one.

This one is about qualified majority voting in the Level 3 Committees. This text is brought in line with what should be done to guarantee that host Member States have an important say in the group supervision, and it reads that 'the Lamfalussy Level 3 committees take decisions on the basis of a fair and appropriate QMV system that takes into account the relative size of the financial sector and the GDP of each member State, as well as the systemic importance of the financial sector for the Member State'. From then on it is the same text.

President. - Mrs van den Burg, unless I am mistaken I do not think that you read out the correct text.

Ieke van den Burg, co-rapporteur. - Mr President, it is the second one. It was indeed about the deposit guarantee schemes. We tried to strengthen the present text by asking that these rules in the European Union be 'urgently revised to avoid arbitrage between guarantee levels in Member States that may further increase volatility and undermine financial stability instead of increasing security and depositors' confidence'. Then it says they should also guarantee a level playing field for financial institutions. Sorry for this.

(Parliament agreed to accept both oral amendments)

– Before the vote on Amendment 8:

Daniel Dăianu, co-rapporteur. - Mr President, also as an acknowledgement of the frantic search by EU Member States to rescue the banking system, but not in a sufficiently coordinated way, we have thought that it makes sense to introduce this amendment. It reads: 'whereas the increasing cross-border nature of banking in Europe and the need to respond in a coordinated way to adverse shocks, as well as the need to deal with systemic risks effectively, require divergences between the national regimes of Member States to be reduced to the greatest extent possible; whereas there is a need to move beyond the studies that the European Commission has already carried out in this regard and to amend Directive 94/19/EC as soon as possible to provide the same level of protection for bank deposits across the whole European Union in order to preserve financial stability and depositors' confidence and avoid distortions of competition'.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

7.15. Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013 (A6-0350/2008, Alojz Peterle) (vote)

– Before the vote:

Alojz Peterle, rapporteur. - Mr President, I would like to inform you why I, as rapporteur, put seven minuses against the amendments of the Socialist Group. It was a question of my credibility because six of those seven amendments were refused in the ENVI Committee three weeks ago. There were no votes against, and I see no new reasons to change my opinion on this.

The other reason is that we adopted a resolution on safety at work in January and I think that this subject is well covered there. I have no problem with the contents, but I do not think there is any need to repeat some elements in different resolutions. In any case, in order to have an appropriate structure to the text, I would like to table the following oral amendment, in agreement with the shadow rapporteurs. Amendments 1, 3 and 4 are to be moved after paragraph 32, amendment 5 after recital M, and amendment 6 after recital Q. This is just the replacement of that.

President. - To summarise the situation, our rapporteur is not proposing an amendment to the text. He simply wants to ensure that after the vote the services reorganise the final text as he has just proposed.

8. Composition of committees and delegations: see Minutes

9. Verification of credentials: see Minutes

10. Explanations of vote

Oral explanations of vote

Report: Panzeri (A6-0365/2008)

Rumiana Jeleva (PPE-DE). - (BG) Mr President, esteemed colleagues, allow me to start by congratulating colleague Panzeri on his report. I was shadow rapporteur for the PPE-DE Group and voted in favour of this report.

I voted that way because I think that through our work on the compromises we managed to introduce certain amendments and to achieve a more balanced approach on some of the proposals. At the same time,

amendments proposed by our Group, which would have made the report more comprehensive, remained unapproved.

The report should definitely have included a text listing the excessive burden of taxation and the high social security contributions among the principal reasons for the existence and even the growth of the grey economy in certain sectors. In the fight against undeclared work, we must enlist the business community as an ally.

Small and medium-sized undertakings must be facilitated by reducing administrative burdens and simplifying procedures. Evidently, though, discussions and amendments cannot be proposed at this stage owing to the fact that the report was started under one set of rules and was finalised and voted under another.

Report: Zimmer (A6-0364/2008)

Anja Weisgerber (PPE-DE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted against the Zimmer report but nonetheless wish to endorse wholeheartedly the report's objective of promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the European Union. I expressly welcome an approach which advocates adequate minimum income schemes as the basic prerequisite for a life lived in dignity. This principle must apply to people in work and the unemployed.

What I cannot do, however, is vote in favour of a report which repeatedly urges the Member States to introduce minimum wages, and which calls on the Council to agree an EU target for minimum wages. This demand violates the subsidiarity principle and the Member States' fundamental competence in the field of social legislation.

The report also explicitly welcomes the Commission's proposal for a horizontal directive covering all forms of discrimination. I am opposed to discrimination, but I believe that this is the wrong approach.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). - Mr President, thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer my explanation of vote. Just like the last speaker, I do not think anyone can disagree with the goals of the report in terms of promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.

But what we really need to recognise is that we must get away from this idea that, whatever the problem, the solution is to be found at the EU level. Actually, the solution is often not even to be found at a national level.

If we really want to tackle poverty, if we really want to encourage social inclusion, quite often we have to look to the solutions within our own communities. Right across the European Union, right across my own country, right across the city that I represent, London, the greatest city in the world, we see a number of local community groups tackling poverty 'at the coalface', without any intervention from the state. They understand the problems, and the communities are acting together. We have to create the right conditions for local communities to tackle these problems: if you want to look for the solutions, please go to the website of the Centre for Social Justice in my constituency in London.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). - (PL) Mr President, poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It is generally linked to unemployment, and in particular to long-term unemployment. That is why work is considered the best way of preventing poverty. Work is not the only way of preventing poverty, however, as illustrated by the many cases of poverty amongst working people. We should recall that 78 million individuals are threatened by poverty in the European Union. This represents 16% of the Union's citizens.

All levels of public authority must join forces with the social partners, civil society organisations and individual citizens. Social policy and labour market policy need to be better organised and to become more efficient. Sustained and far-reaching efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion are needed.

We should also remember that legislative social protection programmes should have a preventive role. They should serve to promote social cohesion and to facilitate social integration. One of the important points in the report concerns the elimination of child poverty. Particular attention should be paid to the cases of children being brought up by single parents, in large families or in immigrant families. Effective solutions are needed to prevent such people from becoming socially marginalised.

Report: Panzeri (A6-0365/2008)

Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE). - (DE) Mr President, I can support this resolution from the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs because it includes my specific proposals to combat black market labour and particularly undeclared work.

I am particularly gratified by the support for my proposal to ask the European Commission to develop a pilot tool based on models such as the 2 Plus project in Luxembourg, co-financed by the European Social Fund, which is aimed at curbing undeclared work by making it less appealing through a huge simplification of administrative requirements for employers, whilst guaranteeing social security cover for workers, attractive tax rates for the employer, including through the deduction of charges concerning locally based work, and a tax exemption for all work carried out for pay lower than an amount to be determined by the Member State.

My proposal for a framework statute for spouses or family members helping in family businesses to guarantee their compulsory membership of a social security scheme has also been included, and I am very pleased about that. I am also pleased that we point out that running a family is itself a family business, and that recognising this atypical family work and including it in a social security scheme should be considered. The fact is that besides ordinary black market work, there are millions of Europeans, especially women, who work in family business and are left without any individual social security cover.

President. - I would just like to clarify one thing, my dear Astrid, speaking time is limited to one minute, not two. That is almost like undeclared work.

Situation in Belarus (RC B6-0527/2008)

Milan Horáček (Verts/ALE). - (DE) Mr President, I voted in favour of the resolution as it represents an unequivocal call to the Belarusian Government to respect human rights at last.

It is disappointing that hopes of democratic development for the Belarusian people who have to live under Europe's last dictatorship were not fulfilled by the parliamentary elections which took place in September and which were dubious, if not to say falsified. The same applies to the strategic repression of the opposition and civil society.

We have also called on the Council and the Commission today to take further steps towards facilitating and intensifying people-to-people contacts and democratising the country and to consider the possibilities for lowering the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen territory, which is the only way to prevent Belarus and its citizens from becoming increasingly isolated.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). - (PL) Mr President, the defeat of democracy in Belarus is particularly painful in the context of the Union's new policy of reconciliation towards that country, following the events in Georgia. Mr Lukashenko failed to recognise the gesture made by Europe and the opportunity to emerge from isolation. The OSCE report states that the elections in Belarus did not meet democratic standards. The new parliament will therefore once again be composed of people subservient to Europe's last dictator. It seems necessary to continue the policy of thawing mutual relations despite these abuses. It must be emphasised, however, that the Union should not be the only one to make concessions. The President of Belarus needs to display clear goodwill as demonstrated by appropriate actions. The pressure on Mr Lukashenko ought to be stepped up, but at the same time benefits should be offered to the people of Belarus, so that Europe's offer is perceived as a better choice than the alternative of forging closer ties with Russia.

Suspension of the WTO Doha Round (RC-B6-0521/2008)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE). - (PL) Mr President, the successful completion of the negotiations in the framework of the Doha Round seems increasingly unlikely. Mr Mandelson's resignation from the post of Trade Commissioner is one reason for this. The talks will probably only resume after the start of 2010. The situation is further complicated by the fact that during the next two years elections are due not only in the United States but also in India and in Brazil. This means that the new negotiations will be conducted by a different group of people. For the first time, the European Union is not responsible for the breakdown of the talks. The United States and India are to be blamed for the collapse of the July ministerial talks. According to the experts, however, the main reason for the breakdown was a lack of progress on services and industry.

Should there be a return to the negotiating table, priority must be given to consideration of how to help the poorest countries. At the same time, however, we must not disregard our own interests, notably those of the agricultural sector. Opening up our market unduly would amount to a serious threat to the stability of farm incomes. Many farms could be bankrupted as a result. Should that happen, how would we be able to guarantee the European Union's food security? Failure to reach agreement on trade issues is an example of

how difficult it is to reach a compromise on important matters when such a large number of countries with such varied interests are involved in the talks.

Let us hope for a more positive outcome to the international negotiations on combating climate change.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). - Mr President, thank you very much for offering me this opportunity to offer my explanation of vote on the suspension of the Doha Round.

It is with great gratitude that I recognise that most of this House is quite sad at the suspension of the WTO Doha Round, because actually there were real goals to be gained from further liberalisation.

Unfortunately, once again, it was agriculture that held us up, and, while the EU managed to avoid the blame, I think we have to recognise that we had our own internal politics and that, when Commissioner Mandelson wanted to go further on agriculture, he was held back by some of the most protectionist states in the European Union.

We need to recognise that there is a greater goal out here; that services that make up so much of our economy need to be unlocked and liberalised. Unfortunately we have to unlock agriculture and goods before we unlock trade in services.

We need further opening of trade. We need to stop protecting uncompetitive farmers. We need to make it easier for entrepreneurs and farmers in developing countries and poorer countries to trade with us, sell their goods and services, because only trade, not the large aid industry, will help these people out of poverty.

Report: Carnero González (A6-0347/2008)

Bogdan Pęk (UEN). - (PL) Mr President, the report before us has already gained the approval of a majority in this House. Just before the vote, however, Mr Duff, a leading Member, ventured to express his surprise that Eastern European countries which have only recently acceded to the Union should be opposed to the introduction of the flag and anthem as compulsory in the European Parliament. I really must explain immediately to Mr Duff that there is ample justification for the simple slogan used during the campaign, indicating that rule from Brussels was no better than rule from Moscow. After all, the ease with which Brussels can introduce and implement changes that infringe European law is in sharp contrast with the difficulty in implementing the principles of solidarity, honesty and non-discrimination. A relevant example is energy policy whereby measures that will ruin Poland's energy industry were imposed on Poland pursuant to the force of law and in contravention of the aforementioned principles.

Frank Vanhecke (NI). - (NL) Mr President, we have just adopted by a large majority, although I and a number of my colleagues voted against it, a report that introduces for this institution a flag, an anthem, a motto, a public holiday: all the symbols, the 'trappings' of a real state. There is a Dutch cabaret performer, Wim Sonneveld, who in fact would not be out of place in this Parliament, and he would say about something like this, 'Well, that is the limit'.

However, I want to remind you that it was not so long ago, after the clear rejection of the European Constitution in the Netherlands and France at the time, that the provisions on the use of symbols were very carefully removed and they were no longer to be included in the Treaty of Lisbon because it was realised that the public did not want them. Now Parliament is going to adopt them again and even maintain in the text that they must be included in order to give a clear political signal to citizens. What a cynical joke! The European 'nomenklatura' of privileged people is marching on but, ladies and gentlemen, the people of Europe stopped following them a long time ago.

Philip Claeys (NI). - (NL) Mr President, in the debate on the Carnero González report it seemed at times as though we were talking about the European symbols themselves rather than their inclusion in our Rules of Procedure. Right now the debate is not about the symbols, although I can well imagine that a lot of people have questions about the Europe Day on 9 May. However, the point is that first of all it was promised that the outward symbols of a European superstate would not be included in the Treaty of Lisbon, which most Member States have ratified, and now suddenly they are going to be included and enshrined in the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure. That is simply showing contempt for the voters, the citizens of Europe. From our ivory towers in Brussels we have once again managed to alienate ourselves even further from the citizens in the Member States. This is sad.

Daniel Hannan (NI). - Mr President, we are generally encouraged to regard nationalism as arbitrary, transient and faintly discreditable – but, when it is Euro- nationalism, we take a completely different attitude and we

are invited to revel in the emblems and trappings of statehood: a flag, an anthem, a national day and all the rest of it.

I take particular exception to the appropriation of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the European anthem, which we are now all expected to stand to attention to. I am afraid it has rather the same effect on me as it has on Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and for the same reasons, namely that it has bad connotations.

But the point I want to make is this: the sole, and rather token, change that was made to the European Constitution when it was turned into the Lisbon Treaty was the removal of these European national symbols.

In unilaterally putting them back in, this Parliament, this ageing and decrepit Parliament, is flicking two liver-stained and liver-spotted fingers at the electorates who rejected that European Constitution.

If you want these symbols to have binding force, have the courage to put it to the people in a referendum. *Pactio Olisipiensis censenda est!*

Roger Helmer (NI). - Mr President, I voted against this report by Mr Carnero González, which seeks to reintroduce more extensively in this Parliament the European flag and the European anthem.

In my country, the people were told that the Lisbon Treaty was so different from the European Constitution that it was no longer justified to have a referendum, and yet the only substantive difference that I can find between the Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty is the removal of these trappings of statehood. Now this Parliament is seeking to bring them back again.

This illustrates the deceit on which the whole European project is based. It illustrates also the monumental contempt with which we in this House treat public opinion and treat the electors who voted us into this place. We must now have a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in its entirety.

Syed Kamall (PPE-DE). - Mr President, thank you very much for offering me the opportunity to give my explanation of vote on this particularly important issue.

Like the previous speakers, I note the duplicity with which those who support the European project often operate. We were told, for example, that the Lisbon Treaty would fall if any country voted against it. When the French and Dutch duly voted 'no', we were told that actually most countries want it to continue, so we should continue.

When the Irish rejected it, rather than simply accepting this as the final nail in the coffin of the Lisbon Treaty, we were told that we must find a way to make the Irish vote again until they vote the right way. Here is yet another example. We were told that the Lisbon Treaty is completely different to the Constitution. 'Look at the evidence,' they say, 'we have changed the font size, we have moved it around, it is completely different and we have stripped out the symbols of the European Union'. We warned that this would not last for long. Those who support the project would find a way of reintroducing the symbols. This is exactly what has been done.

My plea to those of you who support the European project is to be honest with the electorate and have the courage to put it to a referendum.

Report: Seeber (A6-0362/2008)

Gyula Hegyi (PSE). - (HU) Climate change in Central Europe would seem to be mainly expressed as a radical re-distribution of precipitation. A long dry period was followed by torrential rains. Droughts and floods can cause damage running into billions. This is an indication that climate change has indeed begun. European climate policy must address damage mitigation, disaster prevention and ways to slow down climate change. We have to develop water storage and irrigation systems, precipitation reserves have to be maintained in our cities and in the countryside so that we will have water in times of drought. This is particularly important in Hungary's Alföld region. Better water management has to be achieved by the European Union, as a Community policy, and serious European Union funding should be made available in the next budget.

Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (PPE-DE). - (ES) Mr President, I have to say that I voted against this report, because it is a bad report. The subject of climate change is an all-embracing one and water scarcity is an issue that also affects land and requires a comprehensive approach.

This document seems to be claiming that the only solution is to conserve tap water and water in our cities' pipes. This is a reductionist, unsystematic and unsustainable approach. I opposed the report even though it

makes some good points, such as the fact that water must be for all or that we must share resources and that there must be solidarity among regions.

However, I agree with Mr Hegyi that we need to take action with regard to land. The new approach consists of conserving water on land through new dams, new river regulation, disaster prevention, new agricultural strategies that allow a fresh approach and, of course, water diversion where necessary.

Social and economic concerns have a bearing on people's lives and in terms of the food shortages the world is facing. This is what should have been taken into account in this motion for a resolution.

Madeleine Jouye de Grandmaison (GUE/NGL). - (FR) Mr President, I voted in favour of the report by Mr Seeber because of its merits. I thank those who enabled the amendments I proposed to be adopted.

I do have one concern, however: it relates to the pollution of soil and groundwater through the use of dangerous agricultural pollutants. This has occurred in the French Overseas Territories, specifically Martinique and Guadeloupe, as a result of chlordecone, a molecule with a long lifespan. This pollutant, which has been banned in Europe for almost 30 years, continued to be used in the French Overseas Territories up until 1997.

Today, in addition to threatening to cause serious public health problems and hindering economic development, this pollution will make it impossible to meet the targets laid down by the WFD, the European Water Framework Directive of 23 October 2000, at least as far as Martinique is concerned.

Will the European Commission eventually admit that some Member States are violating its Directives on sectors as sensitive as the environment and health?

Report: van den Burg and Dăianu (A6-0359/2008)

Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE). - (FR) Mr President, I would like to rectify my vote on Amendments 3 and 9 of the van den Burg report. I voted against them by mistake but I wanted to vote for them. Why? I feel that the proposal on capital requirements could stipulate that originators must include part of their securitised products in their balance sheet, impose capital requirements on originators, calculated on the basis that they hold that part of the loans, or envisage other means of ensuring the adequacy of the interests of investors and originators. I also believe that the self-regulatory solutions proposed by the credit rating agencies may prove to be insufficient given the pivotal role they play in the financial system.

President. - You have a four-second credit left for the next time, Astrid.

Report: Alojz Peterle (A6-0350/2008)

Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE). - (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have just heard that the opponents of reform are living in the past. We want to shape the future! Those who oppose reform should stay at home in their nation-states and support those who are working for Europe.

Mr Peterle has said it all: we want our citizens to live long and healthy lives. That is why we have worked actively on the issue of age-related illnesses in the Seventh EU Research Framework Programme. Now the time has come to give massive support to the freelancers, independent workers and one-man businesses within the framework of the Small Business Act so that they, too, can play an active role in the health market and thus give citizens more choice in this market in future and empower them to select the best solution in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Written explanations of vote

Report: Leinen (A6-0372/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. - (FR) I voted in favour of the decision to approve a general framework laying down the main aspects of the Commission communication on Europe entitled 'Communicating Europe in Partnership'. It aims to establish a framework for strengthening the wide-ranging communication elements by encompassing them within a broader structure launched by the White Paper on a European communication policy, which advocates a two-way street, characterised by the active participation of citizens and Plan D ('Plan D for democracy, dialogue and debate').

It is important to recognise that this communication, launched by the Commission following the failure of the draft Constitutional Treaty to encourage discussion of the relations between the Union's democratic institutions and its citizens, does not appear to have met its objectives. Plan D is a failure: how can there be

democracy without dialogue and dialogue without debate? This clearly does little to bridge the enormous gap that has opened up between the citizens, who no longer understand the meaning of European integration, and the institutions, which have become too opaque and incomprehensible. We can only hope that this new attempt to reach an interinstitutional agreement will enable us to move forward.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) We have no objections to informing and educating citizens in the Member States objectively and factually about EU cooperation. However, it must not be propaganda for the introduction of even more supranational control in the Union.

In the joint declaration on communicating Europe, to which this report relates, mention is also made of several different EU programmes, such as 'Plan D' and 'Citizens for Europe', of which Junilistan is fiercely critical. The declaration also pays tribute to EU parties, and to the connected political foundations, which Junilistan considers must be built from below by the Member States' national parties and not from above by the EU bureaucracy.

We have therefore voted against the report. We consider that the joint declaration on communicating Europe should have been drafted differently and should have stressed factual information and education and an open debate in which political forces that want intergovernmental cooperation in Europe, not a United States of Europe, can also participate.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Another 'typical' report ...

While asserting that 'communication is an important element of both representative and participatory democracy', the report is actually 'concerned' – which is the nicest way of putting it – about the results of the referendums that rejected the proposed Treaty, now known as the 'Lisbon Treaty', and explicitly with the one held in Ireland.

Accordingly, a majority in Parliament have decided to approve the joint declaration entitled 'Communicating Europe in Partnership'. In this, three of the EU institutions (Council, European Commission and Parliament) agree on a crusade of propaganda – which, it should be noted, will continue right through the forthcoming European Parliament elections – based on the assumption that the increasing rejection and awareness of the nature of class and the major interests that are behind EU policies, as demonstrated by these referendums, will be overcome by conditioning and controlling the media agenda.

In actual fact this involves an attempt to hide or conceal the real content of EU policies and decision-making where these conflict with the interests of workers and other social strata in the various EU countries.

By demagogically using the words 'democracy' and 'communication', what the report is really trying to do is to call these into question.

Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I and my British Conservative colleagues are supportive of factual information being available to the public on EU policies and institutions and improving transparency.

However, speaking in the current economic and financial circumstances, we believe that there are other priorities which are more pressing and important for the EU to deal with.

For this reason, we have decided to abstain on this report.

Report: Marinescu (A6-0343/2008)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LV) This protocol is the 'logical extension' of the Agreement with the EU 25. Using the same legal bases as the previous protocol (Protocol with the EU 10), the present protocol gives Switzerland the right to maintain quantitative limits for workers and self-employed persons from Romania and Bulgaria, in order to gradually ease access for the two nationalities to the Swiss labour market, with larger groups admitted each year.

To my mind, the extension of this Agreement to Romania and Bulgaria will intensify competition on the Swiss labour market, it will make it easier to send Swiss employees to these two countries, it will improve the possibilities of recruiting Romanian and Bulgarian personnel and it will also open future markets for the Swiss export.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) I support this initiative, which aims to once again extend the Agreement (of June 2002) on the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU in order to include Romania and Bulgaria.

This extension will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the promotion of new work and investment opportunities and also on the economic growth of all the countries concerned, particularly through the increase in the volume of trade between them.

Special transitional periods are planned, up to a limit of seven years, during which Switzerland will have the right to maintain quantitative limits for workers and self-employed persons from Romania and Bulgaria, in order to gradually ease access for the two nationalities to the Swiss labour market and increase the number of these new workers admitted each year, bearing in mind market needs and the availability of work in Switzerland.

The same quantitative limits may also be applied by Romania and Bulgaria for Swiss nationals during these same periods.

At the end of this period, quotas may only be reintroduced if the necessary conditions laid down in the protection clause are met. This may only apply until 2019.

Bogusław Liberadzki (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of adoption of the report on the Council decision on the signature, on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, of a Protocol to the Agreement between the European Community and its Member States of the one part and the Swiss Confederation of the other, on the free movement of persons, regarding the participation, as contracting parties, of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania pursuant to their accession to the European Union (9116/2008 – C6-0209/2008 C6-0209/2008 – 2008/0080(AVC)).

The rapporteur, Mr Marinescu, unreservedly agrees to an extension of the scope of the agreement. He rightly points out that this represents a tremendous opportunity both for Switzerland on the one part and for Romania and Bulgaria on the other. It is also a move that disseminates European Union policy based on economic growth and employment growth.

As Mr Marinescu indicated, however, the fact that the solution reached differs from the earlier treaty involving the Ten in terms of the timetable is cause for concern. I fully agree that the extension of the transitional period for the two aforementioned countries contained in the document is a negative measure.

It is important to bear all this in mind and press for a speedy ratification and implementation process immediately after the 2009 referendum.

Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) A referendum on the extension of the free circulation agreement with the European Union and the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria will be organised in Switzerland on 8 February 2009.

According to some Swiss parties, the referendum is aimed at stopping “the massive uncontrolled migration” from Romania and Bulgaria. Switzerland had also organised such a referendum in September 2005 after the 2004 enlargement. Fortunately, the result of that referendum was a positive one.

We must not contest each state’s right to organise a referendum; however, I believe that each of the Member States must make sure that the European Union is united, regardless of the results of the consultation in question.

Dumitru Oprea (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted in favour of the recommendation of Mr. Marian Jean Marinescu (A 6-0343/2008) for the following reasons:

Article 45 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that, “Every citizen of the Union has the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States” while the Treaty of Rome stated in 1957 that, “any discrimination on the grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.

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It is natural that both Romania and Bulgaria, as new Member States of the European Union take part at signing the protocol to the EC/Switzerland Agreement on the free circulation of people, to benefit from its provisions and from the same rights as all European states. Otherwise we could not speak of a real “European citizenship”, in agreement with the Maastricht Treaty (1993).

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the report by Mr Marinescu on the extension of the agreement on the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU to Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the European Union on 1 January 2007.

Like the rapporteur, I believe that this extension should bring economic advantages to both contracting parties in terms of boosting employment, opening up export markets and, consequently, increasing trade and economic growth, while preserving Switzerland's right to apply the transitional measures already laid down in the previous protocol (EU-10), albeit with the necessary adjustments.

Report: Romagnoli (A6-0360/2008)

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), in writing. – (LV) The aim of this proposal is to implement the principles already agreed in previous regulatory instruments, by creating an electronic interconnection between national records – the lack of which has until now prevented the European records system from functioning effectively. This proposal is intended to supplement in technical and IT terms the system set up by the previous regulatory instruments. However, there is no change in the basic principles: the point of reference remains the Member State of which the convicted person has nationality; the information is only kept in the central national records and is not directly accessible to the records of the other Member States; the Member States manage and update their own databases.

With the adoption of this act, the 27 Member States, all of which currently have their own judicial and social sensitivities, would find a common focal point.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Since 2005 the European Commission has brought forward a range of legislative initiatives aimed at regulating and facilitating the exchange of criminal records in order to do away with a slow and basically inefficient system that operated on the basis of mechanisms laid down in the 1959 Convention of the Council of Europe.

The first improvement was made with the 2005 Council Decision on the exchange of information extracted from the criminal record, particularly with regard to shortening transmission times.

In 2007 the Council reached political agreement on a framework decision which aims to ensure that each Member State can respond as fully and correctly as possible to requests for criminal records made to them on their nationals.

The present initiative does not aim to alter the basic principles of that framework decision, but rather to supplement them. It aims to create a computerised system for the exchange of information on convictions between the Member States, in other words the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).

There will still be 27 different legal systems, all with their own judicial and social sensitivities, but the aim has been to find a common focal point to allow the practical application of the system.

In this context, to ensure that there is adequate data protection, we can once again clearly see the urgent need to adopt the framework decision on data protection in the third pillar, for which I have repeatedly called.

Gérard Deprez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report on ECRIS because behind this obscure acronym lies the key element in the networking of national criminal records.

Make no mistake: we are not going to create a super, centralised database. Each Member State will continue to centralise the information on its citizens; each national central administration will be the only body that has access to the interconnection with the other European records.

The national judicial authorities will thus be unable to access the 'European record' directly: they will have to send requests for information to their country's central record, which will act as an intermediary.

Before now the European records system did not function effectively. Of course we had the pilot project that was launched in 2006 and involved Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain, which were subsequently joined by others in the light of its success.

We also had the decision on the organisation and content of the exchange of information extracted from criminal records between Member States.

However, we lacked a text that organised this electronic interconnection at a technical level.

That has now been achieved with ECRIS, which demonstrates that the new technologies are facilitating the day-to-day operation of justice in the Union.

Koenraad Dillen (NI), *in writing*. – (NL) The Romagnoli report deserves our support, because it represents real progress in judicial cooperation between the Member States. In the past there have been too many cases in which the criminal records of serious offenders living in a Member State other than their country of origin have not been passed on to public prosecutors' offices. The Fourniret case in Belgium is the saddest example of that.

It is a good idea to have a harmonised European criminal records system, provided, of course, that the fundamental rights of everyone are guaranteed. The freedom of expression that is seriously restricted in some Member States by 'anti-racism' laws that impose prison sentences might be a problem in this respect. The criminalisation of expressions of opinion in Belgium, for instance, goes much further than in countries like Italy and the United Kingdom, where freedom of expression is actually respected.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) This is a consultation procedure intended to result in agreement on the proposal to establish the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), which will involve the computerised exchange of information between Member States.

The Commission confirms that the central objective is 'to reinforce the European area of security and justice' and that 'information about previous convictions shall circulate between judges and prosecutors as well as police authorities'.

As indicated, the 'objective presupposes the systematic exchange between the competent authorities of the Member States of information extracted from national criminal records in a way that would guarantee their common understanding and efficiency of such exchange'.

We believe that, when necessary, the transmission of information extracted from the criminal records of citizens of one Member State to another Member State must be effected on the basis of (bilateral) cooperation between the parties concerned. However, among other issues whose scope and implications should be assessed, the report imposes obligations on the Member States which fall within the 'communitisation' of justice and home affairs to an extent that goes beyond the basis of cooperation between Member States that we recommend.

We obviously recognise the need for mechanisms allowing the reciprocal transmission of information extracted from criminal records between the Member States, but this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis and within a framework of cooperation.

Carl Lang (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) The report by our colleague signals a real step forward for the organisation and content of the exchange of information extracted from criminal records between Member States.

There is no doubt that individuals such as Fourniret, a disgusting paedophile who managed to terrorise people in France and then in Belgium because his criminal record had not been forwarded from one country to another, may still exist. Such monsters, murderers, louts and thieves cannot hide from justice behind a lack of transparency in the various national databases.

For these imperious reasons, we support the establishment of the European Criminal Records Information System insofar as it will guarantee each person's fundamental freedoms. I am thinking in particular of the necessary protection of the freedom of expression and of the ideological penalisation of the crime of having an opinion when it does not conform to the pro-European dogmas and dictatorship of the politically correct.

The electronic interconnection of criminal records will also require us to take essential precautions such as guaranteeing the integrity and authenticity of the information exchanged and ensuring that it is updated. We are today at the preliminary stage of this mechanism: we must therefore remain alert and prudent.

Bogusław Liberadzki (PSE), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted in favour of the report on the proposal for a Council decision on the establishment of the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), in application of Article 11 of Framework Decision 2008/XX/JHA (COM (2008) 0332 – C6 – 0216/2008 – 2008/0101(CNS)).

Mr Romagnoli, the rapporteur, has rightly emphasised that the aforementioned proposal aims to implement principles already agreed and to provide implementing measures, rather than outline them again.

It is extremely important to set up electronic communication, so as to make the transfer of information within the framework of the European Criminal Records System more efficient. At present, it takes too long to transfer data. In today's world, however, this is vital for success.

The following points must be borne in mind:

- every effort should be made to provide court authorities with research tools, so as to ensure full success,
- the S/TESTA system guaranteeing security of the network is essential for data protection.

It has been noted that the proposed legal basis is not appropriate. This is cause for concern and should be checked against the relevant Treaties.

In conclusion, I consider that the report should be adopted and efforts made to implement the decisions in the Member States.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) At a time when cross-border crime is on the increase, cooperation between the Member States becomes ever more important. Nor should we forget that a crime which may be subject to stiff penalties in one country may be regarded as a minor offence in another. That is something we should bear in mind. It is also essential to adhere to data protection requirements and uphold the rights of the accused and the victims alike. This appears to be guaranteed by the report before us, which is why I supported it in the vote.

Nicolae Vlad Popa (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of this report as I believe it plays an important role in implementing the European information system on judicial records, by creating technical and practical means that provide for an exchange of information between the Member States.

However, I believe that the text voted for can be improved in the future (after the provisional use of the S-TESA administrative communication network) by using communication system of the European Judicial Network for the following reasons:

- By adopting the Kaufmann report, the European Parliament has supported the creation of a modern and safe telecommunications network for the European Judicial Network;
- Judicial record information is one of the topics covered by the European Judicial Network which promotes justice in the Member States;
- Important savings will be made by using one single communication network;
- The use of a unique system for communications with a legal character will provide for rapid, safe, integrated and easy access by interested parties to the information required.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – The British Conservatives voted against this proposal on the basis that it extends the national authorities' ability to extract information on criminal records without recourse to proper scrutiny. We remain in favour of intergovernmental cooperation in the field of criminal justice but not automatic right of access to such data.

Report: Panzeri (A6-0365/2008)

Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats have chosen to vote in favour of the report on the fight against undeclared work (A6-0365/2008). The report includes many important provisions, including those concerning the main contractor's responsibility for irregularities on the part of subcontractors. The report also objects to the recent tendency on the part of the Court of Justice in interpreting the directive on the posting of workers.

On the whole, then, the report is good, but we wish to make clear that we believe that taxation policy, and above all the choice of taxation level, is a matter for the Member States. Nevertheless, there was no opportunity to vote separately on those parts of the report.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by my Italian colleague Pier Antonio Panzeri on stepping up the fight against undeclared work, drawn up on the basis of the communication from the European Commission. It recommends strengthening the fight against the underground economy, which threatens the economy as a whole, leaves workers without any protection, is harmful to consumers and reduces fiscal income, resulting in unfair competition among businesses.

It is important to distinguish clearly between criminal or illegal activities and work that is legal but is not declared to the authorities, i.e. that does not comply with the various regulatory constraints, notably the payment of social security contributions and taxes. Naturally the controls need to be stepped up. However,

we must also continue to reduce the burden of taxation on the workforce, in accordance with each country's situation, by improving the quality of public finances. It is essential to reduce the administrative complexities of the taxation and social welfare systems, which can encourage undeclared work, particularly among the self-employed and small businesses.

We must urgently look into setting up a European platform for cooperation between workplace inspectors and other relevant bodies responsible for monitoring and combating fraud.

Philip Bushill-Matthews (PPE-DE), in writing. – British Conservatives support measures to step up the fight against undeclared work, particularly some measures mentioned in the report – those encouraging Member States to reduce the burden of taxation on the workforce and promoting the benefits of legal employment for example.

However, several points made in the report we cannot support.

These include the setting up of a Community-level platform for the coordination of labour inspectorates and a review of Directive 96/71/EC on the posting of workers. British Conservatives believe that the Directive needs to be better implemented but does not require legal modification which could lead to confusion for employers and employees. For these reasons Conservatives abstained.

Petru Filip (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for the report on acceleration of the fight against undeclared work as the undeclared work phenomenon is a severe problem throughout the entire Community. The spread of the black labour market is mainly the result of excessive taxation and bureaucracy and leads to a significant decrease in tax revenues and, implicitly, it results in deficient budgets.

Moreover, employing staff without complying with the requisite formalities also encourages unfair competition. In this context, besides the increased attention that the authorities should show to reducing taxes on the labour market and to reducing bureaucracy, I would emphasise the need to stimulate the creation of new jobs and to introduce flexible rules for temporary and occasional employment.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) A well functioning labour market requires both good legislation and effective coordination between the social partners and the relevant authorities. Undeclared work is just one of many serious problems for which the social partners must find solutions.

The Panzeri report abounds in good intentions and, in some cases, generous advice on how the individual Member States can organise their labour markets in general and deal with the problem of undeclared work in particular. Among other things, the rapporteur encourages the Member States to continue with tax and social security system reforms and to take concerted action with a view to combating undeclared work. The rapporteur also proposes a common approach to immigration in the EU and that 'any reform of economic policies, tax and social protection systems in the Member States by Member States should be integrated and take into account the key causes of undeclared work'.

Junilistan considers that labour market policy is a national matter, and we are therefore greatly concerned at how the EU is persistently trying to increase its influence in these questions at the expense of the self-determination of the individual Member States. For those reasons, Junilistan chose to vote against the report.

Małgorzata Handzlik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) Undeclared work is a complex multi-faceted phenomenon. It encompasses economic, social, institutional and even cultural dimensions, and is detrimental to many entities. The national budget loses income it obviously needs to cover its expenditure. As to the workers in the underground economy themselves, they are often deprived of the rights to which employees are entitled. In addition, these workers are exposed to health and safety risks and have few opportunities for professional development.

Undeclared work is also a problem for the internal market. It is detrimental to operation of the latter. The reasons for undeclared work vary across the Member States, and the measures taken to combat it must therefore differ accordingly. I agree with the main points in the report, whereby efforts to combat this phenomenon should be intensified. That is why I supported the report by Mr Panzeri.

I should like to make it abundantly clear, however, that I do not believe that the proposed review of the provisions of the Directive, in the context of the rulings of the European Court of Justice, will prove an effective tool with which to combat undeclared work. I shall consistently oppose calls to amend the provisions of the Directive on posted workers.

I believe that in relation to combating undeclared work involving posted workers, strengthening administrative cooperation and exchanging information between Member States is all that is required.

Jens Holm and Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (SV) We consider that effective measures must be taken to stop undeclared work.

However, we cannot accept that, for example, a common immigration policy should be part of the solution to the problem of undeclared work. We therefore abstained in the final vote.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – Undeclared work is a phenomenon which affects all Member States of the EU. Undeclared work is most common in labour-intensive and often low-paid work and the workers involved do not benefit from job security, social benefits or workers' rights. The EU and its Member States must take action to reduce levels of undeclared work and accordingly I voted in favour of the Panzeri report.

Carl Lang (NI), in writing. – (FR) It is essential to combat undeclared work, particularly when this cancer of the economy is increasing, thereby curbing our growth and distorting competition on the internal market through social dumping. The first victims of this underground economy are the legal workers, the citizens of the Member States, whose legitimate economic and social rights are threatened.

We could welcome this report for what it denounces. Unfortunately, it is one more opportunity for these relentless pro-Europeans to use as a social lever the option of large-scale economic immigration: emergency immigration, in their view, for the broken European economy and population. This call to replace the immigration of illegal labour with 'legal' immigration is unfounded hypocrisy. Moreover, it makes no economic, social or societal sense.

France and Europe do not have to open up more 'channels for legal immigration' when they cannot even stop illegal immigration. In order to boost growth and regain control of the internal market we need to restore the citizens' confidence through a family-oriented and pro-birth policy, through better training and guidance for young people and the unemployed, and, finally, through Community preference and protection.

Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) I abstained from voting on the Panzeri report on 'stepping up the fight against undeclared work'. Although there are some good points in the report, I believe that the report will again introduce elements of flexicurity on the European labour market via a short cut. Flexicurity will lead to more flexibility for employers and less security for workers. I cannot agree to that.

Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL), in writing. – The report contains a number of problems, including the promotion of atypical contracts and of 'flexicurity', which risk undermining fixed employment contracts. Also the fact that the report is framed in the context of the deeply flawed Lisbon Strategy is a problem

There also appear to be contradictions in what is being said in relation to the posted workers in different language versions.

Despite these difficulties the report contains enough positive elements for me to be able to support it.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) Around 20% of work in Europe is undeclared. That undermines our social security system. It is admitted in this proposal that the market is to some extent corrupt and that that leads to unfair competition. We support action against undeclared work, but we have to abstain from voting because this proposal has serious shortcomings. Unfortunately, it is based on a neo-liberal idea that plays off workers against each other. The fight against undeclared work is used as an excuse to promote the greater flexibility of labour. That puts Europeans in a worse position on the labour market because they are forced to compete with cheap labour from elsewhere.

The EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 are having far-reaching effects. The differences in welfare within the EU have increased considerably because in many of the new Member States what used to be successful industries have now collapsed. Those countries now mainly import goods and export labour. People from Poland and Romania go to other countries to work for wages that are not really allowed there, in unacceptable conditions. Advantage is then taken of their low wages to bring down the wages of others. Europe cannot integrate further if we have widely differing levels of income within the EU and those differences are exploited in competition.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am voting in favour of the report by Mr Panzeri on stepping up the fight against undeclared work.

I believe that it is more necessary than ever to fight against the spread of a phenomenon which prevents fair competition between businesses and local areas, creates administrative difficulties and has extremely adverse effects on workers employed legally. I agree on the need to make serious, concerted efforts to combat this phenomenon, through preventive measures, incentives and a heightened sense of responsibility, as well as through repressive measures, by means of effective surveillance and appropriate penalties.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), *in writing*. – We need to do more to help those workers who are affected by the exploitation of ‘undeclared work’. Their health and safety are jeopardised by unscrupulous employers.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) We are voting against the report because it essentially aims to perpetuate the brutal exploitation of workers. It does not address the problem of undeclared work from the point of view of workers’ interests. Quite the opposite: it is based on the need to maintain the profitability of capital and strengthen the competitiveness of EU monopolies in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. For this reason, instead of measures like inspections and penalties for employers, it proposes incentives for capital such as ‘reducing the non-wage costs’. This reduces or waives the obligation to pay insurance contributions. These are tax exemptions as well; the financial burden on businesses is being reduced and informal employment contracts are being introduced.

Such measures not only fail to address the problem of undeclared work, but also give capital complete impunity. There will thus be an increase in this kind of employment, so labour, social and insurance rights will be violated, and the working classes will be ever more exploited.

The working class cannot expect any solution in its favour on behalf of the EU, the European Parliament or plutocracy’s political personnel.

The workers’ struggle through the labour movement aims to overturn the anti-popular policy of the EU and the bourgeois governments of the Member States. This will bring about radical changes in power and guarantee that the wealth produced by the workers will be used for the benefit of the people.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (PL) Undeclared work has become a widespread phenomenon in the European Union. In Denmark, for example, up to 18% of the population undertake work of this nature or have had contact with it.

It is very often the case that an employee is not penalised in any way for undertaking such work. In general, it is the employer who is penalised. In what could be described as the best case scenario, the employee is required to pay a fine, which is in any case lower than the fine paid by the employer. Theoretically, undeclared work does not constitute grounds to deport a person to their country of origin. Certain countries such as Belgium and Denmark do, however, indicate that this may happen in certain cases such as those involving blatant and persistent violation of the law.

The European Union should make every effort to succeed in combating this phenomenon. The most effective approach is to lower taxes and eliminate administrative barriers on the legal labour market, so that undeclared work eventually becomes unprofitable for both parties.

Report: Zimmer (A6-0364/2008)

Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats have voted in favour of this report on the important fight to combat social exclusion. However, we wish to make clear our position on the points relating to minimum wages. We share the view that the number of working poor in Europe must be reduced. All wage earners in Europe must be guaranteed an acceptable income. Member States that wish to do this through statutory minimum wages are free to do so. It is also clear that Member States which have left it to the social partners to fix wages must continue to do that.

Comparisons are made between different labour market models and the ways they guarantee wage earners reasonable wages in the Lisbon Strategy. It is important that such exchanges of experience take place between the Member States.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my German colleague Gabriele Zimmer on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the European Union. A sizable part of the Union’s population remains socially excluded: 16% of the population lives at risk of income poverty, one in five lives in sub-standard housing, 10% lives in households where nobody works, long-term unemployment is approaching 4% and the proportion of early school leavers is

over 15%. Another aspect of social exclusion that is becoming more important is the lack of access to information technologies.

Like the vast majority of my fellow Members, I welcome the Commission's approach to active social inclusion, which must enable people to live in dignity and participate in society and in the labour market. I support the call to the Member States to define minimum income schemes to promote social inclusion and support schemes aimed at lifting people out of poverty and enabling them to lead a dignified life.

Šarūnas Birutis (ALDE), in writing. – (LV) Combating poverty and social exclusion is the main issue on the agenda of the European Union and the Member States. In March 2000, when the Lisbon Strategy began to be implemented, the Council instructed the Member States and the European Commission to take measures to radically reduce poverty, leading to its eradication by 2010. The Member States have demonstrated their determination through their numerous actions at both EU and national level. However, combating poverty and trying to reintegrate people who have been rejected by the labour market remains a hefty task for the enlarged European Union. We will not be able to achieve the goals of the revised Lisbon Strategy if we continue to waste human capital, which is our most precious resource.

Most of the Member States are pursuing a welfare policy as well as an activation policy, seeking to reintegrate people who have been driven out of the labour market. Nevertheless, there is still a large group of people who have little chance of finding employment and who therefore risk finding themselves socially excluded and below the poverty line. Minimum income schemes are the only way for those furthest from the labour market to avoid severe poverty. While performing these vital functions, however, minimum income schemes should encourage the integration into the labour market of those capable of working. The main task, therefore, is to ensure that welfare policy helps to efficiently guarantee the mobilisation of those capable of working as well as achieve a longer-term goal – guaranteeing an acceptable lifestyle for those who are and will remain beyond the labour market.

Philip Bushill-Matthews (PPE-DE), in writing. – British Conservatives support the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty. While the report contains some positive elements highlighting the plight of certain groups in society, we cannot support other paragraphs which refer for example to the establishment of an EU-wide minimum wage. Many countries in the EU have a minimum wage but British Conservatives believe that this is a matter for Member States to decide.

The report also contains some negative references to part-time work which the Delegation considers is in no way representative of the UK situation. For these reasons Conservatives abstained on this report.

Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SV) We have chosen to vote against the report on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty in the EU because many of the proposals concern areas which should be dealt with at national level. The content in health care is primarily a national responsibility, as is essentially the specific content in labour market policy. These two areas are best addressed at national level, closer to the citizens. Measures such as minimum wages also run counter to the aim of the report, by creating multiple obstacles in the fight against social exclusion.

Petru Filip (PPE-DE), in writing. – (RO) I congratulate the report for having grasped well the factors promoting an active social inclusion process and for this reason I voted for the material being debated. To render this inclusion more efficient, I would like to remind you of some issues that I considered appropriate from the perspective of the learning process as I consider that young people should receive extremely stable training through an organised and coherent method of social and professional development.

I believe that we need a unified approach to the educational systems of the EU-27, but we also need to focus on the recognition of diplomas and professional certificates and on linguistic training in order to remove communication barriers within Europe. I would also welcome the initiation of a coherent method for monitoring future graduates and their practical training for their inclusion in the labour market, through Labour Exchanges organised on regional criteria and not only on national criteria, with the aim of promoting better employment dynamics within the EU.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) This report on poverty in Europe is evidence of the overwhelming failure of the policies implemented by the European Union and further illustration of the lack of realism in this House.

There are more than 80 million people 'at risk of poverty', to use the terminology in the report; more than 100 million Europeans live in sub-standard housing; and more than 30 million workers are earning extremely low wages, and this figure is actually much higher in reality since in France alone 7 million workers are considered to be poor.

I would like to focus on this last aspect. The rapporteur proposes minimum wages and sufficient income levels to prevent social exclusion, but what use is that in a Europe that at the same time promotes the large-scale immigration of low-cost labour? What use is that in a Europe that allows social dumping between its Member States, as highlighted by the scandalous Court of Justice rulings in the Viking and Laval cases? What use is that in a Europe that sacrifices its workers to the global free trade regime? Is the aim to supplement shamefully low wages, and allow them to persist, with public funds?

Once again we see the limits of the system you have imposed on us for 50 years. It is time for a change!

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – It is an outrage that child poverty remains such a pressing issue in 21st-century Europe. My own country Scotland, which is rich in natural resources, has disgraceful levels of child poverty – whilst the UK government in London remains committed to such wasteful and inhumane projects as the renewal of the Trident missile system. Fortunately the Scottish Government is committed to using such powers as they currently have to tackling child poverty issues. Only last week the Scottish Education Secretary announced a scheme to provide free school meals to children in their first three years at school, a welcome move in the current economic circumstances. This move will help in the fight against child poverty; so much more will be done when an Independent Scotland has full control over the nation's finances.

Thomas Mann (PPE-DE), in writing. – (DE) I voted in favour of the Zimmer report on combating poverty. Politicians must take firm action to reduce poverty and combat social exclusion. For someone who is surviving on inadequate welfare benefits, working in a precarious employment relationship or is growing up in a family with a long history of poverty, fine words are not enough. Adequate social protection, individual education and training from an early stage and the motivation to climb out of the poverty spiral by one's own efforts all play a vital role here.

It is therefore very regrettable that it is no longer possible to table amendments to own-initiative reports in plenary. The PPE-DE Group rejects paragraph 5 and paragraphs 10 to 17, which deal with the issue of minimum wages. We are opposed to EU-wide stipulations: the partners in the collective bargaining process should be able to adopt their decisions autonomously. Of course we do not want any working poor, in other words, people who work very hard for far too little pay. Justice is a fundamental element of the social market economy, and there must be fairness in matters of pay as well. Nonetheless, deriving a minimum wage entitlement from that is not something we can support.

A horizontal directive on non-discrimination is also being proposed again, which my Group unanimously rejects. We would also have preferred a more concise report. Nonetheless, as the objectives and measures are the right ones – namely to reduce poverty on an EU-wide basis – the majority of my Group is able to vote in favour of the report.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Combating poverty is a priority for any democratic society which has its roots in human dignity and the participation of all citizens in the development of society. The measures adopted to date have not yet achieved the desired results of a drastic reduction in social exclusion and poverty. We are missing a global approach to a problem of global scale whose complexity has serious social and economic consequences for society as a whole.

Promoting economic growth as a primary objective for a prosperous, fair and environmentally sustainable future for Europe requires income support to prevent social exclusion, a link to inclusive labour markets, better access to quality services and active participation of all citizens. We cannot allow 16% of the European population to be threatened by poverty, or one in every five Europeans to live in sub-standard housing, or one in every ten Europeans to live in a family where no one works. These are the reasons for our constant battle against poverty, an affliction that threatens everyone and prevents the future healthy growth of our societies.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am voting in favour of the report by Mrs Zimmer on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the European Union.

Clearly, a good deal still remains to be done within the European Union to ensure that the inclusion we so often discuss is real and effective. The aims of eradicating poverty, developing labour markets which promote social inclusion, and guaranteeing all citizens access to high-quality services and a sufficient income to ensure a decent lifestyle – as mentioned by Mrs Zimmer in her report – should obviously be endorsed and deserve our full attention.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE), *in writing*. – (SV) Gabriele Zimmer's report is a typical example of what happens when the chosen subject is not sufficiently well defined. There are certainly a host of clever ideas about the importance of a reasonable fiscal pressure, alongside strange statements about the importance of citizens' wages and EU-prescribed minimum wages. Regardless of what you think about the substance – and in the latter two cases my view is firmly negative – you can see that these are not areas where the EU has, or should have, competences. Because neither the political substance nor the political level are consistent with my fundamental convictions as a liberal and a member of the Liberal Party of Sweden, Folkpartiet, I have therefore voted to reject the proposal, even though the report also contains a number of observations which are worthy of consideration.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), *in writing*. – Combating poverty in the EU is essential to realising a more equal society. One in five children in the EU lives on the brink of poverty and yet we are one of the richest places in the world. We need to work together to find solutions to eradicate child poverty in the EU.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (PL) In 2006, 19% of children were at risk of poverty compared with 16% of the total population. At present, 19 million of the 78 million people living in poverty in our continent are children.

I should like to mention just some of the many causes of poverty. They include insufficient income, inadequate access to basic services, limited opportunities for development and differences in the effectiveness of general and targeted policies.

The policy of supporting families with children provides for combating the poverty and social exclusion that affects single parents. It should also combat the threat posed by the aforementioned problems. That is why I believe that the Union should not spare its efforts in this regard.

Report: Zaleski (A6-0337/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my esteemed Polish colleague and friend Zbigniew Zaleski aimed at approving the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Community and Ukraine in relation to preservation of commitments on trade in services contained in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that was signed in Luxembourg in 1994 and entered into force on 1 March 1998. These services are covered by Ukraine's commitments as part of its accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with the exception of international maritime transport, which continues to be the subject of a bilateral agreement.

I agree with the rapporteur that the services area is essential for the EU and Ukrainian economies. I welcome all the efforts made by the European Union to support Ukraine's efforts to become a member of the World Trade Organisation.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We know that the percentage of working poor is increasing as a result of the growth in precarious and poorly paid work. This issue should therefore be one of the central concerns of those responsible for the European Union. Pay in general and minimum wages in particular – regardless of whether they are defined by law or collective agreement – must ensure a dignified standard of living.

It is important that this report has been adopted, but it was regrettable that the majority did not allow its debate in plenary. The promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty, particularly child poverty in the EU, are uncomfortable issues given that we do not like being faced with the facts. It is said that 20 million people in the EU, mostly women, or around 6% of the total population, are working poor and that 36% of the active population is at risk of falling into the category of working poor. Among the various recommendations made in the report, the European Parliament urges the Member States to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2012 and agree on an EU-wide commitment to end the phenomenon of street children by 2015.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) Junilistan is in favour increasing trade and deepening economic relations with Ukraine. We have previously voted in favour of establishing a cooperation agreement with Ukraine (Brok report A6-0023/2004).

The Zaleski report has its basis in a Commission proposal whose aim is only to renew some of the cooperation agreement with Ukraine following the country's accession to the WTO. Nevertheless, the report is characterised by interventionist ambitions and far-reaching proposals on ways for the EU to control developments in a number of policy areas in Ukraine, including energy policy, financial policy, telecommunications, water, tourism and education.

Because Junilistan is firmly opposed to the EU's foreign policy ambitions, we have chosen to vote against the report.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The explanatory statement accompanying this report excelled in demonstrating what is actually at stake and therefore justified our vote against the report.

The rapporteur confirms that Ukraine's accession to the WTO would pave 'the way to the creation of a comprehensive EU/Ukraine Free Trade Area, including further commitments in trade in services' and that, to achieve that objective, 'Ukraine needs to undertake domestic reforms and hold ambitious talks with the EU'.

Based on this premise, the rapporteur gives some examples:

- 'speed up further integration of Ukraine's transport infrastructure, in particular ports and waterways, into the European transport network';
- 'full inclusion of Ukraine in the "Single European Sky", which may imply some liberalisation of aviation-related activities including airports';
- 'insists on the fact that a proper functioning energy market and an efficient oil and gas transit policy are the necessary preconditions for the full integration of Ukraine into the EU energy system';
- 'The conclusion of the FTA make it possible to not only eliminate restrictions on the movement of capital, but also restrictions on financial services'.

More words for what purpose...

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am voting in favour of the report by Mr Zaleski on the conclusion of the EC-Ukraine Agreement on the preservation of commitments on trade in services contained in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, concerning freedom to provide international maritime transport services in their inland waterways.

I agree with Mr Zaleski that there is great potential for growth in trade between the EU and Ukraine, especially as far as trade in services is concerned. I believe this report to be fully in line with the European neighbourhood policy, which has included Ukraine since 2004, and that the service sector is the one in which this policy can be most fruitful in terms of economic benefits for both parties.

IASCF: Review of the constitution – Public Accountability and the Composition of the IASB Proposals for Change (B6-0450/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution tabled by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs on the reform of the IASB (International Accounting Standards Board) as part of the debate held following the oral question submitted within the framework of the consultation of the International Accounting Standards Committee Foundation (IASCF).

It is important to remember that through the committee procedure, the European Union, within the framework of Community law, converts the international accounting standards drawn up by the IASB. In spite of this Community adoption procedure, it is essential to ensure that the IASB functions correctly and the creation of a Monitoring Group is a positive step. This Monitoring Group should reflect the balance of the world's most significant currency areas, cultural diversity, and the interests of both developed and emerging economies and of international institutions that have accountability requirements before public authorities.

The Monitoring Group must play an active role in promoting the transparency of financial reporting and the development and effective functioning of capital markets, as well as avoiding pro-cyclicality, ensuring financial market stability and preventing systemic risk.

Peter Skinner (PSE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report which has now been appropriately debated in committee and on the floor.

It is vital that we have a strong monitoring body which is made up of institutions which are responsible to elected bodies.

I hope now that the transparency of decisions can be seen as just as essential as the decisions themselves.

Situation in Belarus (RC B6-0527/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the European Parliament's resolution of 9 October 2008 tabled by six political groups, including the PPE-DE, on the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2008. The statements by President Alexander Lukashenko had given us some hope: he had publicly called for open and democratic elections on 10 July 2008 and had reiterated this call on television on 29 August 2008, promising that the elections would be unprecedented in terms of fairness. It is unacceptable that, in spite of a few minor improvements, the elections of 28 September 2008 fell short of internationally recognised democratic standards, as confirmed by the OSCE Election Observation Mission. For fear of democracy, the last dictator in Europe wasted an opportunity to join the procession of the magnificent and great historical developments that we have witnessed since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of communism.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) Junilistan considers that the EU is a union of values and should therefore play a role in promoting democracy and human rights in its neighbourhood. That includes Belarus.

The parliamentary elections which were held in Belarus in September do not appear to have lived up to international standards, something which was also highlighted by international observers. It is highly regrettable that the elections were not transparent and democratic, for Belarus, for the region and for Europe.

However, the resolution contains several provisions which should not be included. For example, the European Parliament calls on Belarus to abolish the early-voting procedure. It may be true that some electoral fraud occurs through this type of voting, but we still consider that it is up to each sovereign state to decide how the elections will be conducted, as long as they are democratic. There are also ideas on visas, which we consider to be a national matter. It is up to each sovereign state to decide who is permitted to reside in its territory.

Despite the objections we have put forward above, we have voted in favour of the resolution because we believe that it is important to stress that Belarus must become democratic.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) For the nth time, do not expect us to whitewash your exercises in hypocrisy and barefaced interference.

Among other aspects worthy of note, a majority in this Parliament has tried, in this resolution, through a tortuous exercise, to question what the OSCE Election Observation Mission has not questioned (for example, the democratic legitimacy of the elected parliament) and to urge use of the EU's financial resources for operations of interference.

However, the fundamental issue concerns the kind of morals held by a Parliament that judges elections held in different countries on the basis of the geostrategic, political and economic interests of the EU's major powers? I would remind you of the failure to recognise the results of the Palestinian elections... I would remind you of the exhortation of the results of the Georgian elections ... It is just pure cynicism.

What kind of morals does a Parliament have that insists on adopting a proposed Treaty that was rejected by the French and Dutch in 2005 and by the Irish in 2008, with total disregard for the democratic and sovereignly expressed will of these people?

What kind of morals does a Parliament have that, at this very sitting, has adopted a report that aims to impose the so-called 'symbols of the Union' when this Union does not legally exist and after these symbols have been removed from the text of the proposed Treaty?

Filip Kaczmarek (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of the resolution on Belarus. The resolution is both balanced and necessary. It represents an effort to improve the situation in Belarus. Clearly, we are all longing for the emergence of a free and democratic Belarus that shares our European values and standards. I believe that the situation can be improved. Finding an appropriate scenario and implementing its provisions is a *sine qua non* to improvement. I trust that the resolution adopted will bring us closer to such a solution.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) Belarus represents a clear challenge to the goal of the European Union to act as a promoter of democracy in the world, particularly in its neighbouring countries.

In the theoretical discussion of this issue, we are with those who believe that the promotion of democracy has as much legitimacy and merit in itself as it does in defence of its own interests. For this reason, in addition to current issues which are very important (such as the release of political prisoners or a slight improvement in the quality of the election process), I believe that we should underline that the important point for us is to answer the question: what can the EU do to promote democracy in its neighbouring countries? What mechanisms does the EU have (and in particular what mechanisms should it have) for this purpose? If we truly want to be democratic neighbours and we do not have the carrot of accession to offer everyone, which road should we then take?

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the European Parliament's motion for a resolution on the situation in Belarus following the parliamentary elections of 28 September 2008.

Despite remarkable signs of openness on the part of the Belarusian authorities, such as their release of political prisoners and refusal to recognise the unilateral independence declared by South Ossetia and Abkhazia, I believe in fact that the democratic legitimacy of the recent elections is questionable at the very least.

This situation is the result of internal policies which in no way match those of the European Union, as demonstrated by the existence of the death penalty and the application of certain articles of the Criminal Code as instruments of repression. For this reason the Belarusian Government must, in future, take steps to guarantee truly democratic elections in keeping with the provisions of international law.

Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), in writing. – I and my British Conservative colleagues have today voted strongly in favour of the joint motion on the situation in Belarus. We are fully supportive of the democratic opposition forces in Belarus and concur with all the key points relating to the questionable democratic legitimacy of the new parliament.

With regard to paragraph 19 of the resolution, we wish to make clear that the issue of the death penalty is traditionally a matter of conscience for British Conservative MEPs.

Suspension of the WTO Doha Round (RC-B6-0521/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of and signed the PPE resolution drawn up by my Greek friend and former minister Georgios Papastamkos on the suspension of the Doha Round. These negotiations reached a stalemate in July 2008 and I regret Pascal Lamy's stubborn insistence on securing, at any cost, an overly ambitious agreement, forgetting that Doha is first and foremost a development round aimed at helping the least advanced and developing countries.

This failure adds to the current global economic uncertainty and calls into question the credibility of the WTO, resulting in a shift towards regional and bilateral trade agreements. I am fully committed to the multilateral approach to trade policy and to a WTO able to guarantee a comprehensive and balanced outcome for international trade on the basis of full respect for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

I regret that Commissioner Peter Mandelson was not on the European Commission bench to give an account of his mandate, while recognising the British Government's urgent need for a member who will distil the European approach, notably for the resolution of the financial crisis.

Glyn Ford (PSE), in writing. – I supported this joint resolution that expresses Parliament's regret and disappointment at the suspension of the WTO Doha Round. So near, yet so far. The reality is that, with the imminent US elections looming in November and the consequent arrival of a new Administration in Washington, there will be no US Trade Negotiator in a position to negotiate before next summer. At that point Europe will be itself resetting its political centre of gravity. Doha is needed and is necessary, but we will not return to it until 2010 at the earliest. In the meantime the EU must continue to negotiate its region-to-region FTAs with the Republic of Korea, the countries of ASEAN and India.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) Junilistan accepts that the EU has a central role to play in trade policy. Good relations and well-developed global trade are fundamental requirements in the effort towards economic prosperity for all the world's countries, not least the very poorest.

Junilistan therefore supports many of the provisions in the resolution. The call on the developed and advanced developing countries to offer LDCs 100% duty-free, quota-free market access, including to the internal market, is welcome. We also support the proposal to reform the WTO in order to make it more effective and transparent and improve its democratic legitimacy once the Doha Round is over.

On the other hand, we regret that the resolution contains references to the Lisbon Treaty. The proposed treaty's entry into force should be regarded as extremely uncertain, in particular in the light of the Irish people's rejection of the treaty earlier this year. Continued references to the Lisbon Treaty therefore indicate a failure to accept the rules of the democratic system.

However, on the whole the resolution's provisions are founded on a healthy understanding of the importance of global trade for continued development and prosperity. Junilistan has therefore chosen to vote in favour of the resolution in its entirety.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) This is a case of the proverbial ostrich with its head buried in the sand...

Faced with the breakdown of the July 2008 WTO negotiations – in which only seven of its members took part – due to the differences of opinion between the EU and the United States on the one hand and the main developing countries on the other, once again a majority in this Parliament have been forced by circumstance to moderate their language in order to try and salvage the agenda and objectives of liberalisation of world trade through the current negotiating round.

In essence, behind the euphemistically termed 'Doha Development Agenda' and other verbal 'platitudes', most of this Parliament has not questioned the fundamental point, which is the current negotiating mandate that the Council defined seven years ago and that the European Commission is desperately trying to formalise.

However, despite their continued efforts, the agenda of economic control promoted by the EU's major financial and economic groups has now come up against increasing contradictions and the interests of the developing countries.

The EU's true intentions are demonstrated by the content of the bilateral 'free trade' agreements it is trying to impose on the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and on Latin American and Asian countries.

Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL), in writing. – As the negotiations collapsed it was becoming clearer that agriculture in the EU was being undermined in the name of 'development', but that the 'development' in question was in the interests of service providers in developed countries and of the global food corporations rather than the people of developing countries.

The Mandelson proposals should be taken off the table immediately.

In the current climate where the consequences of the lack of regulation of international finance are ever more apparent, food security needs to become a priority in a way which is beneficial to developing and developed countries. This justifies having non-market mechanisms to support the farm sector. In the current climate where the consequences of the lack of control of international finance are all too apparent this is particularly urgent.

The WTO Doha round needs a complete reorientation in order to create a win-win situation for the EU and for developing countries.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing – (RO) As Social-Democrats, we are concerned that the suspension of the World Trade Organisation Doha Round negotiations might affect the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the current context of economic, financial and food crises, it is essential to support a multilateral system that would ensure credible and equitable trade. For this purpose, it is important that the European Parliament participates actively in the international trade negotiations in the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty.

Romania supports the conclusion of a round providing balance on the entire package, as well as inside each sector, such as: agriculture and industrial products.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The successive impasses reached in the Doha Round are bad news for the world. The economy is becoming globalised, whether governments want this or not. The question therefore is whether the national authorities want to regulate this globalisation, whether they want to encourage and stimulate the mechanisms of success of this global wealth-creation process. If the answer is yes, as we argue, then we need to promote more trade, more transparency, and more clarity and predictability in rules. The impasse in the Doha Round will not benefit either the developed countries or the developing countries. It will not promote more wealth or increase confidence at a time of turbulence in the world economy. For these reasons, this statement of the need to determinedly continue with the processes that have led to an increase in international trade merits our agreement. The fact that the European Parliament is still enthusiastic about the virtues and virtualities of trade is a good sign.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on the suspension of the WTO Doha Round.

I am well aware of the difficulties associated with the goal of achieving an unambiguous outcome of the negotiations. I believe that the difficulties connected with the Doha Round highlight the fact that the WTO is in need of an internal reform geared to ensuring transparency and efficiency, which are so far lacking. I would in addition reiterate the need to provide, as part of the Doha Development Round, technical assistance to help the developing countries. Finally, I am convinced that under the present circumstances a positive conclusion to the Doha negotiations could prove to be a factor of stability for the entire world economy.

Report: Carnero González (A6-0347/2008)

Jan Andersson, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats have chosen to vote against Carlos Carnero González's report on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union (A6-0347/2008).

Those symbols already exist and are already used, and do not need to be regulated in this way.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the report by my Spanish colleague Carlos Carnero González on insertion in Parliament's Rules of Procedure of a new Rule 202a on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union. The three symbols (the flag showing 12 golden stars on a blue background, the anthem based on the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the motto 'United in Diversity') help to bring the citizens closer to the European Union and to build a European identity that complements our national identities.

These symbols have been used for more than 30 years by all of the European institutions and were officially adopted by the European Council in 1985. I am pleased with the choice of 9 May as Europe Day: it commemorates 9 May 1950, when the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, in his speech in the Salon de l'Horloge at the Quai d'Orsay, outlined publicly Jean Monnet's idea to bring together coal and steel production under the umbrella of a supranational High Authority, thereby pooling the resources necessary for munitions. At that time, his goal was to prevent another war between France and Germany and to anchor Germany firmly in the Western camp at the beginning of the Cold War.

Koenraad Dillen (NI), in writing. – (NL) I voted against this report. The European Union is not a state, so it must not adorn itself with the symbols of a state or nation such as a national anthem, a flag and so on. It was also the intention of the Treaty of Lisbon and its copy, the so-called European Constitution, which the Irish, French and Dutch voted against, to do that. A little respect for the democratic will of the people would certainly be appropriate here if Europe wants to gain democratic legitimacy. Flags and anthems are for nations, not for economic cooperation associations between states.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) This report on the use of the European Union's symbols by this Parliament is not a report; it is an act of 'constitutional faith', the expression of a quasi-religious credo!

The European Union's symbols – flag, anthem and motto – no longer exist as such from a legal point of view since two European nations broadly rejected the European Constitution in 2005. Nor do they appear in the Lisbon Treaty, itself dead since the Irish vote. There is no European super-state!

Trying to make it exist through the use of these symbols could seem ridiculous, if it did not reflect your deep-rooted contempt for democratic expression and your desire to impose the supranational Eurocratic state at all costs.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. – (SV) We can see that desperate attempts are being made to build a European nation with its own national identity. Experience shows that it is not possible to create a common identity artificially. There are many examples of this, including the state of Belgium, which was created almost 180 years ago by merging Flanders and Wallonia. Despite a common royal family, flag, national anthem and currency, Belgium continues to fall apart.

EU flags, national anthems and Europe Days may appear to be symbolic questions without any great importance. However, they are part of the European Parliament's overarching ambition, namely to build a United States of Europe. The original EU constitution, which was defeated in referendums in France and the Netherlands, contained references to, among other things, the EU's national anthem and flag. These were deleted and the EU's leaders put forward a 'new' treaty, the so-called Lisbon Treaty. So now the European Parliament is trying to take revenge and sneak in the use of EU symbols by the back door.

We consider that EU cooperation is liable to meet the same fate as the Esperanto project, the artificial language which never became a world language, but has largely died out. Identity and unity are created by the people, not by an elite.

We have therefore voted against this report.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) With the adoption of this report – by 503 votes in favour to 96 votes against, with 15 abstentions – the majority of this House has once again demonstrated its profound disregard for the democracy and sovereignty of the people.

This is an attempt to impose the so-called 'symbols of the Union', in this case by incorporating them in the Rules of Procedure of this Parliament, which will stipulate that 'the flag shall be flown at all Parliament premises and on the occasion of official events', that it 'shall be used in each meeting room of the Parliament', that 'the anthem shall be performed at the opening of each constitutive session and at other solemn sittings' and that 'the motto [United in Diversity] shall be reproduced on Parliament's official documents'.

Reference is made to 'the importance of symbols for reconnecting the citizens with the European Union and for building a European identity which is complementary to the national identities of the Member States'.

Does this 'reconnection' involve disregarding and trying to bypass the democratic and sovereignly expressed will of the people who rejected the first proposal for the 'Constitutional' Treaty and then the 'Lisbon' Treaty? What hypocrisy...

Does this 'reconnection' involve imposing these 'symbols of the Union' when the Union does not legally exist and after these symbols have been removed from the text of the proposed Treaty? What cynicism...

In essence this is simply another manoeuvre to try and once again resuscitate the rejected and doubly defunct proposed Treaty.

Anna Hedh (PSE), in writing. – (SV) I have chosen to vote against Carlos Carnero González's report on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union. This is because I do not believe that the use of symbols needs to be laid down in a treaty or in rules of procedure. They are there in any case.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I could not vote in favour of the Carnero report but did not wish to give support to a Eurosceptic point of view either. I am wholeheartedly in favour of the European Union. The party of which I am president is founded on the principle that Scotland should be an independent nation – and we believe that that Independence should be taken up as a free Member State of the EU. Nevertheless, I do not believe that there is any great desire on the part of the people of Europe for the Union to take on the trappings of a super-state. The symbols of the EU were enshrined within the EU Constitution – and that document was rejected in France and the Netherlands. The symbols were then omitted from the Lisbon Treaty which was, nevertheless, rejected in Ireland. If Europe wants to re-engage with its citizens it must bring forward policies which matter to the people – and not play around with meaningless symbols which are completely devoid of substance.

Mikel Irujo Amezaga (Verts/ALE), in writing. – (ES) The people of Europe, along with the vast majority of Members, are extremely concerned by the state of the economy and the evident fragility of our banking

sector. Where is the security for our jobs, savings and pensions? European citizens, far from being 'united in diversity', as the EU motto goes, are instead frightened in adversity and will look on this vote with incredulity.

With this report, Parliament has indulged in some unfruitful navel-gazing and is throwing out all our good work. Parliament's powers that be regularly tear at their hair, asking why European citizens cannot give Parliament its due. It appears that they have decided that symbols and anthems will solve the problem.

I suggest that if some Members focused less on carpets and Beethoven and more on carrying out Parliament's real work, we would not have to ask for voters' trust.

Carl Lang (NI), in writing. – (FR) Europe wants to adorn itself with the regalia of a state. It wants its own anthem, flag, day, currency and motto. We do not want this super-state; we do not want this imposed federalism.

In 2005 the French and Dutch people rejected by referendum the draft European Constitution that incorporated these symbols. In June 2008 it was the Irish who, by rejecting the Lisbon Treaty, again rejected the symbols of this super-state.

It is absolutely scandalous to try to reintroduce them surreptitiously through amendments to the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The people of Europe have a say in this matter and they must be respected. They also have a duty to remember. In the light of our increasingly globalised societies and economies, we must not forget, now more than ever, who we are, where we come from and what our values and our identities are.

Europe will not be built by negating the history of its peoples and its nations and going against the national realities.

Jean-Marie Le Pen (NI), in writing. – (FR) One of the rare differences between the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty signed by the 25 heads of state or government was precisely these EU symbols – the flag, anthem, motto and Europe Day – which were unanimously rejected on 13 December 2007. It was important to keep up appearances and not give European citizens the impression that the structures of a federal state were being put in place.

By seeking to reintroduce these symbols, the European Parliament is once again moving outside the boundaries of the law and deliberately infringing the European Treaties.

There is no doubt that the European institutions have tried this before. The scandalous manner in which the institutions are trying to make Ireland hold another referendum is a caricatural illustration of their idea of democracy. Anything that is opposed to European integration must be eliminated by whatever means possible, including legal means.

How can we have any confidence in this Europe that tramples underfoot the principles that it is supposed to defend and portrays the image of the former Soviet Union, where freedom of opinion and expression was enshrined in the Constitution but never applied?

Ladies and gentlemen, democracy is not shared, nor is totalitarianism. That is all too evident today.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) The rapporteur, Mr Carnero González, says that it is very questionable whether the recognition of a flag could be an obstacle to ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. He is thereby casting doubt on the impression given by the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr Balkenende. Mr Balkenende maintained in Strasbourg on 23 May 2007 that the EU symbols should not be included in a Constitutional Treaty.

His main reason for doing so was that otherwise the Dutch Council of State would find it necessary to have another Dutch referendum. Mr Carnero González is now proposing that the EU flag, the anthem and the motto should be enshrined in the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure. His argument is that this sends a political signal that these symbols represent European values. He expects the EU to be a benchmark for freedom, development and solidarity in the world. The EU is also characterised at least as much by out-of-control ambition, annoying interference, risky pressure towards economic freedom and a military show of strength.

It is better if Europe gains a clearer identity by 'listening to the voters'. This policy of symbols does not change anything. The blue flag is already on all the bank notes and car number plates. We are still acting as though the Treaty of Lisbon is viable, whereas it has been rejected according to its own rules.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The power of symbols should not be underestimated. They can manifest the intangible and create identity. However, symbols can also have negative connotations; for example, the symbol of human DNA has developed into a symbol of genetic manipulation. 'Manipulative' is also the word that I would use to describe the EU's present approach.

In their referenda in 2005, the French and Dutch people rejected the EU Constitution, and yet in a classic case of EU obduracy, an attempt has now been made to give the whole project a fresh veneer by dropping the EU symbols and repackaging this failed but almost identical project as the Lisbon Treaty. If the EU persists in this attempt to revive the original Treaty by introducing just one real amendment, namely jettisoning the EU symbols, the EU will forfeit what remains of its credibility. This is a blatant attempt to mislead our citizens and so I rejected the report.

Cristiana Muscardini (UEN), *in writing*. – (IT) I wish to congratulate the rapporteur on having introduced the symbols of the Union into the Rules of Procedure, now that they have surprisingly been excluded from the new Treaty. As a member of the European Convention, I always asserted that the Union needed to have a soul, bringing it closer to Europe's citizens through our shared common values.

Excluding the symbols from the Treaty was the umpteenth act distancing the European institutions from the citizens. Indeed, how can citizens be expected to identify with the Union if the Union makes itself ever more unidentifiable, abandoning the very symbols which ought – rather – to represent it, both in the Member States and in its international relations?

Recognition by everyone of the symbols of the Union constitutes an initial step towards the shared intent of building a common European home capable not only of giving Europe's citizens political answers but also of restoring to politics the pride of place it deserves in our understanding and management of the 'public good'.

I would therefore repeat my congratulations to the rapporteur, in the hope that this European Parliament initiative will be taken up by the other European institutions, and in the conviction that this will strengthen the parliamentary institution to which we belong.

Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) Since their formation, the European Communities and subsequently the European Union have sought to have symbols that the public can easily identify. The process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty was wrecked due to unsuccessful referenda in France and the Netherlands. The Lisbon Treaty, which was born from a compromise and replaced the text of the Constitutional Treaty, did not adopt the symbols because of the pressure from some Member States.

The public is used to each organisation having its logo. Flags, emblems, anthems, slogans, colours and other types of symbol convey an emotional image of the underlying values of the organisations they represent.

This experience, which is shared by our countries, regions, churches, parties, civil organisations, etc., is also valid at EU level. The flag showing a circle of 12 golden stars on a blue background always fascinates me. When I arrive in Slovakia and see the flag flying from buildings, I feel happy because Slovakia belongs to the common European house. It would be hard to find such a well-known piece of music and poetry that would better symbolise the idea of European integration than the anthem of the European Union from Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Even though the single currency is not yet used by all the Member States, third countries in particular are starting to identify the EU with the euro in the same way as they identify the US with the dollar. I consider the motto 'United in Diversity' to be the perfect definition of the essence of the European project. I agree with the use of the symbols of the Union, which is why I voted for the report by the rapporteur, Mr Carnero González.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I wish to put on record my vote in favour of the report by Mr Carnero González on the insertion in Parliament's Rules of Procedure of a new Rule on the use by Parliament of the symbols of the Union.

As is well known, symbols are worth more than any slogan or words. They are vital components in every kind of communication, especially ones having to do with identification processes in a social group or

organisation. Flags, images and anthems are fundamental in enabling an organisation to be recognised as such by members of the public.

For this reason I applaud our colleague's initiative aimed at helping citizens to become more involved and more in touch with the European project, thereby contributing to its legitimacy.

Daniel Stroj (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (CS) With regard to the report on the use of the symbols of the Union, I can only say that this is a further illustration of the way in which democratic procedures are sidestepped in the European Union. Some time ago, the symbols of the Union collapsed when the proposal for the so-called European Constitution was rejected. The Constitution, or at least its pivotal context, is supposed to be *de facto* 'resuscitated' by the Lisbon Treaty, and now the European Parliament is trying to resuscitate the symbols of the Union. I cannot but ask what the European bodies and institutions intend to do in cases of misuse of these symbols? For example, recently the whole world was able to see the pictures of the Georgian President who had not only the Georgian flag but also the EU flag in his office when he began the conflict with Russia. Surely this is unacceptable.

Konrad Szymański (UEN), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted against legal recognition of European Union symbols by the European Parliament for the following reasons.

Firstly, the notion of legal recognition flies in the face of the decisions of the European Council. In the latter, all the Member States decided to omit the issue of European symbols from the Reform Treaty that replaced the draft Constitutional Treaty.

Secondly, Parliament's decision amounts to bringing the symbols in through the back door, contrary to the wishes of the Member States. Parliament is showing weakness rather than strength by resorting to such legal manoeuvres.

Thirdly, measures of this kind provoke justified mistrust amongst many citizens of European Union Member States, who do not wish symbols reserved for nation states to be assigned to an international organisation like the European Union.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The peoples of Europe are being provoked by this proposed invitation to the European Parliament to play a major part in the promotion and intensive use of EU symbols. Through Parliamentary initiative, efforts are being made to 'raise to life' the 'Euro-Constitution', not merely in its amended version, the Treaty of Lisbon, which was recently rejected by the Irish people, but in its original form, the Constitutional Treaty, which has also been condemned by the peoples of France and the Netherlands.

By adopting this stance, the European Parliament is once again revealing itself as the mainstay and architect of reactionary EU reforms. It shows gross contempt for the verdict of the peoples of France, the Netherlands and Ireland, and for the obvious inclinations of all the other European peoples, who are not moved by the policies, institutions, values, visions and symbols of the European plutocracy so typical of the anti-popular character of the EU.

The peoples of Europe must intensify their struggle to finally reject the reactionary Euro-Constitution. They must fight to undermine the imperialist EU of poverty, injustice, war and oppression. They anticipate its dissolution and aim to establish their own power, ushering in new institutions and symbols corresponding to their own needs and values.

Report: Seeber (A6-0362/2008)

Jan Andersson, Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats agree that consumers have an important function to perform if sustainable use of water resources in the EU is to be achieved. However, we consider that information and education campaigns should be run primarily at local and regional levels and not at the request of the EU.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the excellent own-initiative report by my Austrian colleague Richard Seeber in response to the communication by the European Commission entitled 'Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union'.

I share the regrets concerning the absence of any real international dimension to the European Commission's approach and I support the rapporteur's proposals that the specificity of the water scarcity and droughts issue requires coordinated action at EU and Member State level as well as at regional and local government level. At least 11% of the population and 17% of the territory of the European Union have been affected by

water scarcity, and recent developments have shown that water is likely to become significantly more scarce in Europe.

There is an urgent need for the European Union to establish a water policy that enables us to guarantee for the people of Europe, businesses, public bodies, flora and fauna, etc. that we will have sufficient water of an appropriate quality to meet their needs.

Liam Aylward (UEN), in writing. – Water scarcity is an urgent issue affecting European and global citizens. This report makes us aware that the EU wastes 20% of water due to inefficiency; there is a lack of awareness among the public for promoting water saving and 17% of the EU region suffers from severe water shortage. In response, the EU needs to take a holistic approach with precise measures for better water management and supply.

It is clear that we have a great potential (savings up to 40%) for water saving through technological improvements, changes in human behaviour and production patterns, which should replace the current crisis management style. Water saving technologies and irrigation management in the industrial and agricultural sectors could reduce excesses by as much as 43% while water efficiency measures could decrease water wastage by up to a third. Currently, agriculture consumes 64% of water while 20% is used by energy, 12% by the public and 4% by industry. Furthermore, droughts are increasingly affected by climate change causing forest fires which are environmentally destructive.

The EU aims to enhance recycling of waste water and develop desalination, improve water management policies based on the 'polluter pays' principle, establish labelling schemes, research and monitor activities to halt desertification, improve crop rotation systems and promote more efficient water usage among the public.

Konstantinos Droutsas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) A smattering of fine words cannot hide the anti-popular nature of the proposals in the report, whose main thrust is the reactionary idea of 'demand-based water management'. The report concludes by highlighting a range of measures essentially confined to raising the price of water and the cost of supplying it. Yet another weighty levy is being imposed on the masses and on poor and medium-scale farmers because water is being completely commercialised. The aim is also to increase the profitability of monopoly business groups.

The resolution makes no distinction between drought and water scarcity, which are two different phenomena calling for different responses. There is no mention whatsoever of the principle of preserving and improving the ratio of exploitable water reserves to available water reserves and the precipitation rate.

The report underestimates the positive role of forests as an active factor in mitigating the natural phenomenon of drought and combating water scarcity. As a result, it not only fails to propose reforestation measures, but also emphasises that 'an increase in forest cover' should be undertaken only 'where it is absolutely vital'.

The report downplays the risk of floods and the need to take flood protection measures. Quite the opposite: it asks that we 'avoid creating barriers to the natural course of rivers', and indulges in scaremongering about social and environmental problems caused by rivers being diverted.

The workers are fighting for adequate supplies of clean, safe water. They oppose the commercialisation of what is still a social good, even though it is prey to the profit-making of monopolies.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We disagree with the logic underlying the idea that water management must abide by market principles and, as such, that price (tariffs) must be the central instrument for controlling consumption. The report mentions the need for a return on investments, as if this were the whole or part of the solution to the problem of scarcity. This is simply not true.

Clearly, water losses, river basin planning, re-use of 'grey water', exchange between states and the gradual establishment of an Observatory seem to be concerns or proposals which are full of apparent good intentions. However, these are not apparent in the scheme established by the Framework Water Directive, which calls for the application of economic and financial principles to water management, without safeguarding its main conditions: its enshrinement as a right and its democratic management.

Concerns have also been raised which should be taken into account, even though they question EU policy. The direct relationship between forestry and agricultural policy, between unrestrained urban development and desertification and drought, is established in the report. However, at no time is the CAP questioned as a primary source of desertification in countries such as Portugal.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – As a representative of Scotland, I think many of the issues dealt with in the Seeber report are perhaps of limited interest to my constituents. However, the provision of high-quality water resources is of huge importance in all geographical zones of the EU and issues such as water loss through inefficiency and stresses matter to us all. Water in Scotland is provided through a publicly-owned company answerable to the Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Government has a vision of Scottish Water becoming a compelling example throughout the world of how best to deliver water services. I fully endorse that vision and commend it to this House.

Sebastiano (Nello) Musumeci (UEN), *in writing*. – (IT) The problems of water scarcity and droughts, which are directly related, affect many parts of southern Europe in particular, with disastrous consequences for the environment and for local inhabitants.

The region I come from, Sicily, suffers periods of water stress and drought every year on a regular basis, resulting in severe damage to agriculture. This is an alarming problem, which could partly be solved if energetic action were taken on at least two fronts. The first concerns infrastructure: on the island of Sicily, for example, a good deal of water – estimated to be as much as 30% – is lost owing to poor maintenance of the water mains. The second concerns prevention: I fully agree with the rapporteur when he states that training and education by means of information campaigns, beginning in schools, are crucially important so as to bring about a change in behaviour and create a culture of saving water and consuming it efficiently.

Zita Plešinská (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (SK) I abstained from voting on the report by Mr Richard Seeber. The report is too lengthy and some recommendations are repetitive. The biggest problem is that the entire report is based on the old water paradigm and in only one instance, in paragraph 48, does it touch briefly on the new paradigm, i.e. the need to promote rainwater collection.

Other suggestions and proposals are too muddled and as such their practical application will not be successful. The report omits the integrated approach and focuses only on tap water savings. It is very structured and therefore does not enable unambiguous interpretation.

In the end, it will be the repeat of the story of the EU Water Framework Directive. That Directive's ambition was to promote the integrated management of watercourses in catchment areas. It boiled down to specific policies only. The proof of this is that another Directive was adopted last year: the Floods Directive. Something called 'integrated' is dealt with as a whole, not bit by bit. Sadly, the approach was not integrated and the Framework Directive is used as a tear-off calendar by those working in water management. One minute they are solving the issue of flooding and the next minute the issue of drought.

Something similar happened in Slovakia under socialism, specifically in the East Slovak Lowland. Firstly, we tried to solve the issue of drainage and then, in the second stage, the issue of irrigation. Today the East Slovak Lowland is like a hot plate, forcing clouds to the cooler Carpathian Mountains, where large floods originate.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the Seeber report, which addresses the serious problem of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union.

Water is a finite resource. Safeguarding our ecosystems, water resources, drinking and bathing water is the key to protecting the environment. That is why joint action at European level will ensure that we manage this precious resource in the best possible way.

Furthermore, I would like to compliment Mr Seeber on his work. He has drawn attention to the main issues that the Union should confront: extensive water consumption and the resulting wastage of water, ignorance and a lack of awareness of the problem, as well as the absence of a common European approach.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PL) The problem of water scarcity and drought is now critical, as are the related consequences of global warming. There has been a dramatic increase in cases of extreme drought and water scarcity in recent decades. This is largely due to inefficient water management and overuse of water for agricultural purposes.

The European Union is itself facing serious threats as a result of climate change and human activity. Over one third of Europeans are already living in areas affected by water scarcity. Unless appropriate action is taken immediately to ensure more rational and sustainable use of water, we must assume that more people will be affected by water scarcity in the future. In addition, the predicted population increase from six to nine billion by 2050 will lead to even greater demand for water.

Some experts are beginning to compare water to oil. The era of cheap and relatively easily accessible water is over. Water scarcity in the agricultural sector should be dealt with by developing water retention installations and improving irrigation. In addition, a specific culture of responsible water saving should be developed through an active awareness-raising policy.

Each one of us should begin to save water and use it sensibly. It is also essential to implement technology to prevent water from being wasted and to raise social awareness of this problem. A more integrated approach to the problems relating to water and drought is needed, too.

Arctic Governance (RC-B6-0523/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution tabled by five political groups, including the PPE-DE, on Arctic governance. During the 20th century Arctic air temperatures increased by approximately 5°C, which is ten times faster than the observed global mean surface temperature. Indeed, an additional warming of about 4–7°C in the Arctic is predicted for the next 100 years.

I strongly support the statement that the time for diagnosis is over and the time for action is now. Moreover, the EU counts amongst its Member States three Arctic nations, and amongst its closely related neighbours participating in the internal market through the Agreement creating the European Economic Area (EEA) a further two Arctic nations, meaning that the EU and its associated states comprise more than half the numeric membership of the Arctic Council.

This region plays a key role in the major balances of the planet and I congratulate the authors of this resolution at a time when we are celebrating the International Polar Year.

Glyn Ford (PSE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of Amendment 6 from the Party of European Socialists that called for a nuclear-free and demilitarised Arctic. I am well aware that currently UK submarines operate in these waters, but that is no reason not to support the proposal that an International Agreement be reached to stop the introduction of nuclear weapons and end military activity in this zone in the future. I am disappointed that it was not carried, although I welcome the reference to the UNCLOS Treaty and the need for a future US Senate to ratify it.

Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) We regard as very negative the rejection of the proposed amendments to this resolution which underlined 'the risks involved in any use of the Arctic for strategic or military purposes, and the need to make the Arctic Ocean a demilitarised and nuclear-free zone' and which indicated that we remain 'particularly concerned over the ongoing race for natural resources in the Arctic, which may lead to security threats ... and overall international instability'.

As a result, despite containing some points that we regard as positive, the resolution allows the prospect of an ongoing race for natural resources in that continent, particularly where it states that the High North 'forms part of the EU's Northern Dimension policy' and where it states that it 'is convinced that awareness of the Arctic's importance in a global context needs to be raised further by delivering a standalone EU Arctic policy'.

It also calls on the Commission 'to include energy and security policy in the Arctic region on its agenda' and 'to take a proactive role in the Arctic by at least, as a first step, taking up "observer status" on the Arctic Council'.

Jens Holm, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Erik Meijer, Esko Seppänen and Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – We share the concern of the resolution about the effects of climate change on the sustainability of the communities that inhabit the Arctic area as well as the effects on the natural habitat, and we recognise the significance of the Arctic for the global climate and therefore the Arctic as a common concern.

We cannot, however, support this resolution as its point of departure is first and foremost the interests of the EU. We believe that a policy which is not firmly rooted in the interests of the peoples of the Arctic area is illegitimate. We believe that the starting point for all talks and initiatives concerning the Arctic area must be the respect of the sovereign territory of the Arctic nations and equally the inclusion of all the peoples of the Arctic area as equal partners.

Finally, during the vote a majority rejected an amendment which stressed the need for the Arctic to become a demilitarised and nuclear-free zone, thereby clearing the path for the Arctic policy that this resolution calls

for to include militarisation of the Arctic and placement of nuclear weapons in the area. We cannot support this under any circumstances.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution on Arctic governance in our globalised world.

I am convinced of the need to grasp the potential of the Arctic region in the global context. For this reason the EU requires a specific policy on that region, geared to respecting the local inhabitants and the environment. I welcome our colleague's initiative, in that the environment is a topic of particular importance: there needs to be a cross-border political or legal structure that could mediate in political conflicts over natural resources.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – We share the concern of the resolution about the effects of climate change on the sustainability of the communities that inhabit the Arctic area as well as the effects on the natural habitat; and we recognise the significance of the Arctic for the global climate and therefore the Arctic as a common concern.

We cannot, however, support this resolution as its point of departure is first and foremost the interests of the EU. We believe that a policy which is not firmly rooted in the interests of the peoples of the Arctic area is illegitimate. We believe that the starting point for all talks and initiatives concerning the Arctic area must be the respect of the sovereign territory of the Arctic nations and equally the inclusion of all the peoples of the Arctic area as equal partners.

Finally, during the vote, a majority rejected an amendment which stressed the need for the Arctic to become a demilitarised and nuclear-free zone; thereby clearing the path for the Arctic policy that this resolution calls for to include a militarisation of Arctic and placement of nuclear weapons in the area. We can under no circumstances support this.

Report: Cercas (A6-0357/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by my Spanish colleague Alejandro Cercas (PSE, ES) on the implementation of social legislation relating to road transport. I agree that it is regrettable that considerable differences still remain in the application and enforcement of Regulation (EEC) No 3820/85 on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport.

We must urge the Member States to step up their efforts to guarantee efficient and uniform implementation of the social provisions and to transpose Directive 2002/15/EC on the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities so as to ensure the road safety of citizens and the health and safety of drivers and to provide a clear framework of fair competition.

The European Commission must display the utmost firmness in dealing with infringements of Community law by Member States as regards social provisions in the road transport sector, provide for coercive measures in the event of failure to comply with provisions and take preventive measures, if necessary via judicial process, to ensure strict compliance with Community law. This is essential in order to ensure fair and undistorted competition.

Proinsias De Rossa (PSE), *in writing*. – I voted for this report due to the pressing need for the Member States to transpose social legislation and to ensure it is duly enforced. The health and well-being of freight transport drivers as well as the safety of other road users depend on clear rules concerning issues such as working time, driving hours and periods of rest, as well as on effective inspections and penalties for non-compliance.

It is thus very important that Member States speed up the transposition of Directive 2002/15/EC, and also that the European Parliament assert the support for the inclusion of all road transport drivers within the working time legislation applicable in this field, regardless of their employment status. I can see no reason why self-employed drivers should be exempt from measures which contribute to the safety of our roads.

Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), *in writing*. – (SV) It is with great hesitation that we have chosen to vote in favour of this report. However, the road transport sector is a cross-border question and working conditions for self-employed drivers are part of that question.

There are parts of the report of which we do not approve, for example the question of safe and secure parking areas for professional drivers, which we regard as a matter for the Member States. In addition, we consider that questions relating to working time in general are also a matter for the Member States.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – The EU's social legislation in the area of road transport is of great importance. Road transport is of vital economic importance across the Union. It is also important, however, that social legislation be applied in order to protect both drivers and the public at large. There are anomalies in the existing legislation and there have been shortcomings in national transposition. Accordingly I voted in favour of the Cercas report.

Ona Juknevičienė (ALDE), in writing. – (LV) Road transport is one of the economic areas that plays a very important role in the European internal market. This area is especially important with regard to employment, as more than 3 million people work in the EU transport industry. Despite an abundance of EU legislation aiming to ensure the road safety of European citizens and the health and safety of passenger and freight transport drivers, cases of breaches of the rules on rest periods and breaks are on the increase in the Member States.

This situation has two main causes: the failure of Member States to transpose legislation on road transport into national legislation, or to do so diligently. The health and safety requirements applied to drivers with an employment contract differ from those applied to drivers who are self-employed. The present situation, where legislation on working time is applied only to those with work contracts and not to the self-employed, threatens to distort competition in the transport industry. The number of fictitious self-employed drivers is increasing, as health and safety requirements for self-employed drivers are less stringent. This situation not only encourages unfair competition, but also endangers the health and safety of drivers and other road users. The European Commission aims to ensure that self-employed drivers comply with the same rules laid down in the relevant legislation.

These measures would enable us to achieve much better levels of road safety and to ensure appropriate health and safety conditions for drivers as well as fair competition in the road transport sector.

Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (NL) This proposal is an attempt to take earlier decisions seriously through better controls, better information, secured parking places on motorways and the abolition from 23 March 2009 of exemptions for self-employed workers. The transposition and implementation of social legislation on road transport in national law is hopelessly behind.

The four Member States that fall short in that respect are protected as long as they are not named openly. The fact that they do not regulate working and driving times and rest periods is bad for road safety and for the welfare of professional drivers. My party, the SP, is supporting the plan to do something about this, although better proposals have already been rejected in earlier votes. We are doing that because we believe that it is important to comply with social legislation and because self-employed drivers are also to be covered by the Directive. That will put a stop to the abuse of employers forcing their workers to become self-employed and not on the staff.

Being falsely classified as self-employed, they have worse working conditions and have to take on impossible business risks. The competition in that sector is fierce. The talk about complying with the rules has to be turned into action. Only then can drivers still earn enough and make a secure living.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I wish to put on record my vote in favour of the report by Mr Cercas on the implementation of the social legislation relating to road transport.

The European Parliament needs to speak out on a matter of such importance. Only in this way can we ensure road safety, the safety of drivers and passengers and, not least, fair competition within the common European area.

I furthermore applaud our colleague's initiative, in that it is vital to have clear rules and monitoring procedures so as to organise properly the working time of persons operating in the sector.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) The legislation addressed by Alejandro Cercas is not uncontroversial. I think everyone agrees that it is in the interests of both lorry drivers and the public that large, heavy vehicles are not driven by people who suffer from a serious lack of sleep. Rules are obviously necessary in this area. At the same time, we must realise that the lorry strike which broke out on the Oresund Bridge in November 2007 did not happen by chance. The rules on working time which the EU has produced in many branches of the profession have been much criticised, by both employers and employees. It might therefore be more appropriate to ask the Commission to undertake an impact assessment to examine how the legislation has worked and been received, rather than calling for even more stringent implementation. This kind of legislation

requires considerable flexibility in order to be able to work in, say, both Romania and Denmark. I therefore abstained in the vote.

Report: van den Burg and Dăianu (A6-0359/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by my Dutch colleague Ieke van den Burg and my Romanian colleague Daniel Dăianu containing recommendations to the Commission on the follow-up to the future structure of financial supervision.

I support the formal request to the Commission to put forward legislative proposals to improve the EU financial services regulatory framework, not only because of the financial crisis but because we will be unable to build a European internal market if we do not have a European regulatory policy. I am sorry that the report does not ask the Commission to apply the procedure laid down in Article 105(6) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, which allows it to propose to the Council that it confer upon the European Central Bank specific tasks concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions.

I am strongly in favour of a regulation to strengthen and clarify the status and accountability of the Lamfalussy Level 3 Committees (CESR for securities, CEIOPS for insurance and pensions, and CEBS for banks), giving them legal status commensurate with their duties.

Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Members from the PSD (Portuguese Social Democratic Party) support this report, which is particularly opportune in the light of the international financial crisis. Financial stability must be guaranteed and, in the long term, we must establish measures to tackle systemic risks.

Global problems require coordinated solutions on a global scale. International cooperation is essential to ensure and restore the credibility of the markets.

The European Union is not an exception and the solution to the current problems cannot depend on separate initiatives in each Member State, but requires concerted action. Greater cohesion among the EU Member States is essential.

Following the short-term rapid intervention, we urgently need to carry out an institutional reform of the financial system in order to stabilise the economy, reinvigorate economic growth and reinforce or improve what financial innovation has to offer.

It is important to ensure that there is greater transparency and better financial information, using the technologies available. Only in this way can people increasingly access better practices, products and financial services. Innovation and financial markets must promote better consumer protection.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) This Parliament believes in the intrinsic goodness of the financial markets, in their capacity for resilience and self-regulation, which is why there are only minimal specific rules at European, and perhaps global, level.

However, what the current crisis proves is that exactly the opposite is true. We have been taken to the edge of the abyss by financial disintermediation, the global integration of the European financial sector, the widespread free movement of capital, the securitisation of the globalised economy and the game of a crazy market that creates products that are more and more complex and increasingly out of touch with real economic activity. The nation is the protector and it is the countries' decisions that count in the current context.

The system of supposed free international competition has reached its limits and must be changed, starting with the European Union itself, whose policies and ideological leanings are partly responsible for the situation. Today it is proving its complete uselessness, since it is the states that are acting and reacting. Tomorrow it will prove its capacity to cause damage, since it retains the possibility of sanctioning the national safeguard measures, in the name of competition.

Yes, it is high time we put an end to that Europe.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report, given the urgency of the financial situation hitting the EU and other global financial markets.

This report is important because we need effective regulatory and supervisory arrangements to improve monitoring of the workings of the financial services market.

In particular, I welcome the oral amendment calling for a level playing field in terms of protection for EU citizens in relation to deposit protection. It is unfair that citizens in one Member State can avail of a higher level of protection in terms of sums on deposit – the range across Member States varies from EUR 20 000 to unlimited guarantees in Ireland.

I also welcome the call for a more coordinated response in the EU to the financial crisis and that divergences between the national regimes of Member States should be reduced to the greatest possible extent.

I would also call on the Irish Government to come forward with all the details of the Bank Guarantee Scheme and note that it has now been extended to non-Irish banks mindful of EU competition rules.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the motion for a resolution with recommendations to the Commission on the Lamfalussy follow-up concerning the future structure of supervision.

It is absolutely vital, in view of the serious crisis afflicting the markets, to launch new measures regulating financial services in the European Union. Economic stability is one of the Union's principal objectives; I therefore fully endorse this initiative aimed at guaranteeing our citizens a calm, stable future.

José Albino Silva Peneda (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The European Union is facing a crisis of confidence caused by a lack of direction, transparency, leadership and power among the European institutions.

There is a lack of direction because no one yet has any clear idea how to end this crisis.

There is a lack of transparency because the financial markets have proved to be more opaque than was thought.

There is a lack of leadership because, whilst the US has managed to convey an image of pragmatism, showing that it will not lose control of the situation, Europe has conveyed an image of disorder and even contradiction.

There is a lack of power because each Member State is still doing as it likes. As yet no common figure for the deposit guarantee has been set.

If the Member States that share the single currency are unable to put into practice supranational aid mechanisms, then we are facing a situation that could be devastating for the euro itself.

This exceptional and global situation requires exceptional and global responses and, in particular, urgent responses.

This crisis of confidence will only be overcome through urgent and concerted action.

The European Parliament is doing its job. I hope that the Council will be up to the situation, which is, after all, an emergency.

Peter Skinner (PSE), in writing. – The time for a centrally located single authority at European level may not have come yet. However, there are clear pressures which indicate that such thinking (while ahead of its time) is valid. I hope that during the current financial crises the EU does not shrink away from tackling any of the current shortfalls concerning supervision. The 'college' approach as pronounced in Solvency 2 is a key way forward and allows a kind of half-way-house.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – It was appalling to see UKIP and certain British Conservatives trying to prevent an oral amendment which would protect savers in the current economic climate. Their actions were a disgrace.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I support the report by Mrs van den Burg and Mr Dăianu on the follow-up to the Lamfalussy directives and the future structure of supervision.

There can be no doubt that in view of the current financial crisis caused by unduly risky investments and other activities of banks in the United States, there is an urgent need to reform the regulation and supervision of the financial markets. Without the Lisbon Treaty, however, a coordinated EU policy on the financial crisis cannot work properly. Ratification of the Treaty is essential in order to ensure that the European institutions are adequately represented in the international financial structure.

Market integration is a positive phenomenon, but unfortunately appropriate financial supervision has not kept pace with it. I believe that supervision needs to be updated as soon as possible, and this should be preceded by a comprehensive review of the Union's regulatory and supervisory arrangements.

Citizens, investors and supervisory bodies should be guaranteed an adequate level of transparency. To that end, it would be appropriate to set up a group of advisers to develop a long-term vision of supervision and prepare a programme or plan of action for long-term reform.

I share the view that the Union should set about developing more cohesive and effective legal arrangements now in order to mitigate the risk of future crises.

Report: Alojz Peterle (A6-0350/2008)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE-DE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the own-initiative report by my esteemed Slovenian colleague and friend Alojz Peterle in response to the European Commission's White Paper entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), chronic diseases, strokes and heart disease are steadily overtaking infectious diseases. There is therefore an urgent need to adopt firmer measures in the field of prevention through the widespread introduction of health impact assessments.

The fight against the counterfeiting of medicines must be a priority. I regret that the Commission has not examined in detail the problems affecting health professionals, who must be at the heart of any health policy. I agree with the rapporteur that one of the priority goals in the health sector should be a reduction in health inequalities and inequities. I am in favour of a modern approach to health promotion and protection, particularly for the most vulnerable sections of the population, such as young children, and the introduction of integrated social and health policies.

Edite Estrela (PSE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the Peterle report on the health strategy for 2008-2013 because I believe that ensuring a high level of lifelong human health protection must be an EU priority.

I would reiterate the recommendations made in this report, particularly the proposals that I made, which highlight the importance of developing prevention plans and healthy lifestyle promotion actions throughout the EU and carrying out screening programmes to facilitate the early detection and immediate treatment of disease, thereby reducing the associated mortality and morbidity.

I would also highlight the need to improve the quality of healthcare and assistance provided to citizens, bearing in mind the increased prevalence of chronic diseases and the increasing ageing of the European population.

Genowefa Grabowska (PSE), *in writing*. – (PL) I fully support the report by Mr Peterle. I believe that it is a good follow-up to the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency. The latter gave high priority to health issues, which is entirely understandable, as health is the greatest gift a human being can be blessed with during his or her lifetime. Unfortunately, certain worrying health trends have emerged in Europe. These include an increase in the number of cases of cancer as well as the number of cases of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity. In addition, we need to tackle new challenges linked to the ageing of the population, climate change, globalisation and even the consequences of terrorism in terms of the threat of biological terrorism.

There are marked inequalities between the healthcare systems of the Member States, however. This is particularly true as regards access to healthcare, prevention, detection and effective treatment of certain diseases. The result is significant differences in the life expectancy of Europeans. A study of the health map of Europe leads one to the sad conclusion that, in a sense, the Iron Curtain is still with us. The current divide is based on health.

We must improve methods of cooperation in this area if we wish to remedy the situation. We must also improve the effectiveness of our actions and exploit all of Europe's so-called medical potential. I support the rapporteur's call for investment in healthcare systems to be increased. I believe that funds invested in healthcare are not an expense as such. Instead, they are a vital element of investment in the quality of human capital. The health of EU citizens must be perceived as one of the key social and political factors that will determine the Union's future.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Peterle report on the EU's health strategy. The report acknowledges that the provision of health care is a Member State matter and I strongly believe that this should remain the case. There are elements in this Parliament and in the EU as a whole who believe that health care should be fully opened up to the fluctuations of the free market, and I wholly reject such notions. However the EU does have an important role to play in the exchange of information and in the

promotion of health lifestyles. The Commission must now come forward with concrete proposals for Europe-wide action in health promotion, whilst safeguarding individual Member States' rights to take their own decisions as to the delivery of health services.

Ona Juknevičienė (ALDE), in writing. – (LT) Access to health care is a right of all EU citizens and providing equal access for all to high-quality medical services is a core task of the Member States' public authorities.

I support this document and agree that it covers the most acute health-care problems. Undoubtedly, both at EU level and in the individual Member States, we should concentrate more on long-term health protection. This is particularly important in the case of the elderly and people with physical or mental disabilities and home-based health care.

In view of the shortage of carers and the appreciation of the importance of the services they provide, it is necessary to improve their working conditions as well as ensure that carers receive high-quality training. The Member States should respond to the European Parliament's call to guarantee patients access to lifesaving drugs, even if they are expensive, in order to guarantee the universal right to health.

The Member States should implement the EU's health strategy without delay. This would encourage and facilitate the provision of international health-care services, the free movement of health-care professionals and patients as well as strengthen cooperation between private and public bodies. Most importantly, with the implementation of the EU's health strategy, people throughout the EU would have access to quality health care.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) At present, major differences in health still exist between individual EU Member States. According to Eurostat, life expectancy at birth varies among EU countries by 9 years for women and 13 years for men, and infant mortality rates vary sixfold. In the light of this, I sincerely welcome the efforts made by Mr Peterle, who in his report refers to the need to reduce these inequalities. Since as much as 40% of diseases are linked to unhealthy lifestyles and up to a third of cancers are preventable through early diagnosis, I feel that the remarks about the importance of prevention are particularly valuable.

I agree that since the area of disease prevention still attracts only 3% of health budgets, more funds should be made available from these budgets. By raising public awareness about the importance of prevention and a healthy lifestyle we can eventually lower healthcare costs since it is cheaper to prevent diseases than subsequently treat them. I firmly believe that the countries must take steps to improve healthcare, and in that context the Commission's White Paper and the Council Conclusions of December 2007 provide an appropriate foundation.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) In Germany, between 20 and 30 clinics annually are being forced to close because doctors are being driven into insolvency by claims for damages for supposedly prescribing drugs which are too expensive, and entire swathes of the country are at severe risk of healthcare under-provision. These are just some of the outcomes of the insane health policies pursued in recent years. Nor is the scenario more encouraging elsewhere in Europe. It is not just that healthcare financing is precarious, to say the least: doctors and nursing staff are being forced to spend more and more time shackled to their desks, dealing with red tape, instead of performing their actual task of healthcare delivery.

We need a radical rethink on an EU scale. What we need, for example, are sound strategies to ensure an adequate supply of doctors, together with best practice examples. However, we also need to address fundamental problems such as the falling birth rate among Europe's indigenous population by providing better incentives. We also need models to encourage healthy lifestyles. Prevention is just one small piece in the healthcare puzzle. That is why I abstained in the vote.

Zita Pleštinšá (PPE-DE), in writing. – (SK) Health is one of the things people value most in their lives. Consequently, I welcome the Commission's health strategy entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. I voted for the report by Mr Alojz Peterle, who based his report on three keywords: cooperation, differences and prevention.

Although, in accordance with the principle of solidarity, healthcare falls exclusively within the competence of the Member States, there is nothing to prevent healthcare from being given a European dimension on the basis of cooperation. All Member States can benefit from mutual exchanges of their know-how within the framework of best practice. If one EU Member State can successfully treat a patient for cancer, citizens from all corners of the EU should have an equal chance to make use of this opportunity.

Major inequities in health exist between and within the Member States. As far as cancer is concerned, the differences in survival rates between the new and old Member States are such that we can talk about an 'Iron Curtain in health'. A key strategic breakthrough is needed in the area of disease prevention. Consequently, the long-term planning of preventive measures should be a starting point.

Investment in cancer research in Europe represents only one fifth of the funds it receives in the US. We must invest a great deal more in health than we have done to date, and consistently incorporate health in policies at all levels.

Rovana Plumb (PSE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for this report in the conviction that putting the recommendations into practice will boost life expectancy in the European Union and help us achieve the Lisbon objectives related to economic growth.

The report reveals the vital link between poor application of Community environmental legislation and the adverse consequences on citizens' quality of life.

The battle to reduce the effects of climate change on the population's health must also be supported by active policies aimed at adapting to climate change. One example in this regard is the development of methodologies for forecasting and preventing major health problems which may appear, depending on the severity of the effects of climate changes, while also bearing in mind socio-economic conditions.

Efforts need to be stepped up in order to meet the objective proposed by the Commission in 2005 of achieving a 40% reduction in the number of deaths caused by air pollution by 2020. The studies carried out have demonstrated that two out of five deaths worldwide are directly or indirectly linked to environmental factors.

I congratulate the rapporteur.

Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. – (PT) The White Paper on health in the European Union raises many important questions about the future of Europe and, in particular, about the paradigmatic changes that will affect how our societies operate in the future. I therefore agree with Mr Peterle when he draws attention to the aspects connected with these new challenges, such as ageing of the population, climate change, globalisation and mobility. These must form the foundations of the new policies because they are what will bring fundamental social and economic change. However, we must also take into account the current health problems which are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and cancer. Prevention policies are therefore becoming increasingly important and we must establish a clear framework for the current circumstances, bearing in mind the situation in the 27 Member States and taking account of existing inequalities between social groups and between Member States, so that we can adopt cross-sectoral health policies which will create the conditions for the effective development of health policy.

Luca Romagnoli (NI), in writing. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of the report by Mr Peterle on the EU's commitment and approach to health.

The matter in hand is of paramount importance in the light of the new health threats facing the European Union. For this reason there must be a common approach to giving European citizens adequate protection from those risks. Furthermore, I applaud our colleague's initiative because his report has brought to everyone's attention the importance of health, which does not just mean the absence of sickness or infirmity.

Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing. – The coordination of best practice in health policy is important in the EU in order to provide EU citizens with the best possible treatments and health protection.

Andrzej Jan Szejna (PSE), in writing. – (PL) I voted in favour of the report entitled 'Together for Health : a Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. This strategy is a specific response to the European Commission's White Paper on health policy for the period 2008-2013. The main provisions of the White Paper involve promoting a healthy lifestyle and eliminating the barriers to access to healthcare services in the EU Member States. Protecting the citizens against health risks, ensuring balanced healthcare systems and introducing new technologies in this area are also highlighted. I believe that health promotion strategies should place strong emphasis on the prevention and early detection of diseases.

Certain worrying health trends have become evident recently. These include an increase in cases of cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Only 3% of healthcare budgets is currently allocated to prevention, however, even though it is well known that prevention is better than cure.

The battle against the diseases of modern civilisation will only be won if we provide the citizens with appropriate healthcare and treatment. In addition, we must combat the inequalities in access to healthcare services by individual social groups and reduce the differences between the Member States in terms of access to healthcare. Efforts to ensure health and safety in the workplace are also very important. In addition, more should be done to better adjust healthcare to patients' needs.

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) Public health and its commercialisation are being targeted by the EU. The aim is to multiply capitalist profit by downgrading public structures, which are being limited to high-cost sectors unprofitable for private operators.

The EU is treating health as a means of increasing workers' productivity and reducing social costs. It is intervening in a sector that is exclusively under the authority of the Member States, applying private enterprise criteria, promoting entrepreneurial activity and neglecting the basic human right to health and life. At the same time, the EU is using health as a pretext to promote its expansionist, imperialist plans by proposing the involvement of health services in the CFSP, international trade and relations with third countries.

The Community framework for health services and management of innovation in health systems, and the creation of European centres of excellence and other proposed measures, are the just the first step towards concentrating health services in the hands of a few multinationals. These will do business with private insurance companies to decide on the services provided on the basis of an unacceptable system of class discrimination.

We are voting against the report because we align ourselves with the workers' struggle against the commercialisation and privatisation of health. We support the fight for a free public health system with high-quality services that fully cover the needs of ordinary families.

Bernard Wojciechowski (IND/DEM), in writing. – (PL) I am in favour of adoption of the report on the European Union's healthcare strategy for the years 2008-2013. The sums allocated to disease prevention in healthcare budgets are too low. They represent barely 3% of resources.

We are increasingly aware of an increase in diseases related to contemporary civilisation. These include cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Such conditions are mainly due to poor eating habits and an unhealthy lifestyle. Prevention, perhaps through information campaigns, would be much cheaper for the budgets of healthcare services.

Another issue concerns the conditions of treatment. These vary considerably across the territory of the European Union, ranging from very high standards in the countries of the so-called old Union to much lower ones in the countries that acceded more recently. This is manifested, for example, in higher infant mortality and shorter life expectancy for both men and women.

The European Union should take steps to ensure equal conditions for treatment across all Member States. Healthcare policy should be a priority for the Union.

11. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

12. Communication of Council common positions: see Minutes

13. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes

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

15. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

16. Adjournment of the session

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

(The sitting was closed at 12.05 p.m.)