

## THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2009

IN THE CHAIR: MRS DURANT

*Vice-President*

### 1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.00)

### 2. Crisis in the dairy farming sector (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the debate on the oral question to the Commission (B7-0208/2009) by Mr De Castro, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on the crisis in the dairy farming sector (O-0085/2009).

**Paolo De Castro, author.** – (IT) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the dairy farming sector is going through one of the deepest and most serious crises of the last few decades: the fall in the price of milk and the more general crisis in the dairy farming market have now become a source of concern throughout Europe. This is a cyclical crisis, caused by the difficult economic situation, which has led to a decline in milk consumption and created stagnant markets, with the prices paid to producers in free fall.

The prices paid to milk producers have plummeted everywhere, averaging 24 cents per litre within the European Union. Many economic operators are in an even more serious situation, as they get prices of less than 20-21 cents, when their production costs come to at least 40 cents per litre.

Other markets, such as the cereal, olive oil and fruit and vegetable markets, are showing some alarming signs too. On this front, first of all, we should continue to make use of all the measures at our disposal so as to stabilise the market and to stimulate an upturn in consumption, but at the same time we need to be able to look to the future with medium- and long-term policies and to do everything possible to identify acceptable and lasting solutions aimed at minimising the risk of price fluctuations.

In this context the Commission proposals extending the intervention period for butter and skimmed milk powder have been welcomed and accepted within the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the unanimous vote of 2 September demonstrates. We believe, however, that these proposals are not enough to mitigate the serious consequences of the crisis in the sector. That is why, still in relation to the adoption of the European Commission's proposal, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development has adopted an amendment to my proposal that also reintroduces aid for private storage of cheese, which was abolished under the health check on the common agricultural policy in November 2008.

This was a unanimous decision, Madam President, Commissioner, representing what are, in essence, identical views shared by the members of the Committee on Agriculture, which I have the honour of chairing, and expressing our desire to send out a strong signal to the Council and the Commission at a sensitive time for an extremely important sector for European agriculture.

As well as being a first important demonstration of the positive leadership that we as the European Parliament want to provide when looking ahead to codecision in agricultural matters too, this is a measure that can also offer immediate help to dairy farmers, who are grappling with an increasingly difficult market and with an obvious and dramatic fall in sales.

However, these initial measures, on which we will vote today, are not enough to support the producers in crisis, and that is why the Committee on Agriculture, through an oral question and a resolution on which we are preparing to vote, is calling on the European Commission to introduce new and effective measures to combat the crisis and to support the sector.

We want to encourage and at the same time support the European Commission in the process of deciding what must be done to end the crisis in the European dairy farming sector once and for all. In this sense we hope that the Commission will provide an exhaustive answer to our questions and will take our proposals seriously, so that interinstitutional cooperation produces the results that European agriculture deserves and shows its solidarity by offering practical support to European farmers in crisis, who need our help today.

**Mariann Fischer Boel**, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, would you allow me to use a bit more than the three minutes' speaking time allocated to me, because on this important and serious issue I think three minutes would not actually be sufficient.

First of all, I would like to say that I am very happy with the questions put by the Committee on Agriculture, because this gives me an excellent opportunity to clarify the actions that have already been taken.

Let me also thank Parliament for its ongoing work in this area. We are all committed to finding solutions. You are, and so am I.

Not everyone agrees with my preferred solutions, but I strongly believe that these solutions are working, that they will work, and they are also solutions that we can defend politically.

Mr Paolo De Castro asked on behalf of the Committee that we say what we are actually doing. The top line is good news: prices are improving. For example, in the course of one month butter prices went up by 4% in France, 8% in Germany and even more in the UK.

Skimmed milk powder also went up by 4% in France and Germany, and 2-3% if we look at the average all over Europe.

Average milk prices have been going up, and Albert Deß just told me this morning that the spot market prices are now at 30 cents in certain areas.

We can see that intervention buying on cheese has almost stopped because the market price is higher than the intervention price, which is another positive signal.

We are not yet where we want to be, but we are heading in the right direction. This makes me more confident than ever before that the policy approach that we have been taking from the very beginning is the right one.

You know the key elements of what we have been doing. We have been using all the market measures available and here we expect to spend approximately EUR 600 million over a 12-month period.

We have indicated the possibility for Member States to start the direct payment of the single farm payment to farmers from 16 October instead of 1 December, and we decided under the 2003 reform to decouple the dairy premium – EUR 5 billion every year – and transport it directly into the single payment scheme.

We have the recovery package and the decisions taken in the health check that provide another EUR 4.2 billion to face the new challenges, including restructuring in the dairy sector. All this of course is on top of what we can do under the rural development policy.

Just for clarification to Paolo De Castro, intervention for cheese was actually abolished in 1994. I think there must be some confusion between intervention and private storage because private storage was abolished by the decisions in the health check.

As I said, our current approach seems to be working. I am therefore more determined than ever before not to go back to the future in ways which would hurt our dairy sector in the long term and leave our farmers without any kind of predictability.

In other words, making a U-turn on the health check decision is not an option and something that the European Council, the heads of state, explicitly asked me not to do.

So, the idea of keeping the quota system after 2013 is not on the table. Freezing quotas is not on the table, and neither is any return to the use of certain expensive but inefficient market instruments of the past. They are not on the table.

This certainly does not mean that we have now done the job in terms of policy. I think it is time for further action. We need to follow up on the dairy report from this July, use the measures in there and then decide on other actions for the longer term.

If I could start with the report, I will look first at state aid. The report floated the idea that Member States could temporarily offer aid of up to EUR 15 000 for farmers under this temporary crisis framework. The Commission has actually already launched the boat and expects to change the rules in the coming weeks.

The second point is streamlining the procedures for responding to prices in the dairy sector. At this moment, milk is not actually included in Article 186 of the single Common Market Organisation which allows the

Commission to take temporary actions quickly under its own power during times of market disturbances. I am therefore proposing that we include the dairy sector in Article 186, and this will enable us to spring into action in the future if we hit serious problems in the dairy sector.

For example, our recent extension of intervention had to be approved by the Council, and Parliament voted on this as well, but, if the dairy sector had been included in this Article 186, we could have acted immediately.

More generally speaking, we could with almost immediate effect mobilise measures stimulating demand and/or we could limit the marketing of milk, and all this would only be put in place on a temporary basis and under the condition that we had the necessary financing available.

The third follow-up point from the report concerns the buying-up schemes by Member States. One way to restructure is that Member States can actually buy quotas from farmers and put these quotas into the national reserve.

As you know, the national reserve counts in a sense as part of the Member States' total quota, so if individual producers go over their quota, but Member States as a whole do not exceed their quota, with the national reserve included, then no super levy is actually paid.

What I intend to propose is that bought-up quota kept within the national reserve will not count as part of the national quota when it comes to deciding whether we have to add or to ask the farmers to pay the super levy or not.

If the super levy should then be collected anyway, then the part corresponding to the bought-up quota could then be used for restructuring. It might sound a bit complicated, but it is actually a very efficient tool.

All of these steps are actions that we are taking now with an almost immediate impact on the markets, but we also need to do something about steps for the medium and longer term. I would like to thank France and Germany here for their ideas and their input on these different possibilities.

The first longer-term issue is about using contractual relations between milk farmers and the dairy industry to better balance supply and demand in the dairy market.

I believe that this is a much, much better approach than the quota system, and it already works in parts of the European Union.

Milk producers and dairies have clear agreements which remove a lot of the uncertainty. On the other hand, some Member States simply do not use this possibility, but this can be changed by looking for a legal framework for these contractual relations, whilst clearly safeguarding fair competition.

The second long-term issue is about the balance of power, and you know that we have had this discussion a lot of times. We need to be able to see within the whole chain from primary producer to supermarket chains where the added value is disappearing.

We will look into future markets as well and, finally, I think a lot can be done on production costs and innovation.

In order to deal properly with all these ideas for the medium and long term, I want to establish a working group with experts from the Member States and the Commission so they can go to the heart of these issues.

For me, the problem in the dairy market is not only an issue between the Commission and Member States. Parliament actually plays an important role as well, and I am looking forward to the discussion here today on this important issue.

Thank you for being so patient.

**Albert Deß**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it is, of course, extremely difficult to summarise this problem in two minutes, but I will try to do it in the style of bullet points.

The dairy sector is in trouble. Many dairy farmers are seeing their very existence under threat. The main reason for this is a huge drop in milk product sales. The Commission really should have acted more swiftly in this regard.

I would also have preferred to see stronger sales promotion measures instead of a greater amount of intervention, such as butter fat being used once again in the ice cream industry. Last year, when the price of butter reached more than EUR 4 for a short time, a large proportion of the ice cream industry stopped processing butter fat. I know the figures for Germany, which show that around 100 000 tonnes is no longer being processed by the food industry, which corresponds to a million tonnes of milk. We must try to stimulate sales once again, in order to clear these quantities from the market.

I would like to thank the groups that have helped in drawing up our joint motion for a resolution. Unfortunately, the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance did not participate in this discussion.

Commissioner, as a short-term measure we are calling for an increase in the *de minimis* subsidies in an additional motion which is being tabled with 40 signatures, because this would be an opportunity to help the smaller dairy farmers in particular. It would also make sense to introduce an early retirement regulation. I know a lot of farmers who are 58 years old and who would like to stop working soon. An appropriate regulation would be needed for this.

Commissioner, I would like to thank you sincerely for your work. I would ask you to put in place appropriate regulations to improve the situation of our dairy farmers. Perhaps you will still have the chance to remedy this situation in the near future.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos**, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (PT) Commissioner, the Commission and the Council have taken a long time to react to the serious crisis affecting the sector. We are all agreed on that. The terrible situation the sector is facing requires swift, decisive action, or we risk seeing the ruin of many thousands of farmers throughout Europe.

My political group has made a great effort to enable us to reach the compromise contained in the resolution we are discussing here today. I hope the proposals merit your attention, Commissioner, because only by acting to reduce supply and simultaneously stimulate demand will it be possible to restore market equilibrium and bring prices up to profitable levels for producers.

I regret that the compromise did not include the temporary suspension of increased quotas or the introduction of a likewise temporary premium to reduce production. The measures we propose are, however, a useful contribution for overcoming the crisis more quickly. It remains for you, Commissioner, to duly follow them up.

**George Lyon**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – Madam President, as we have heard from other speakers, there is a crisis in the milk sector. There is no doubt that we must take action to alleviate their pain, but let me make it very clear that this is a short-term crisis which requires short-term market measures by the Commission, as outlined in the resolution.

Let us also be clear that, for too long, European consumers have paid for a dysfunctional agricultural policy which has failed both farmers and consumers. This crisis should not therefore be used as an excuse to turn our backs on the road to further reform and liberalisation of the CAP. That is why we have tabled amendments to this effect and why I welcome your reassurance on this matter.

We also want to see the Commission focused on sorting out the market, which is clearly failing. Consumers are losing out as they fail to get the benefits from the fall in milk prices. Farmers are losing out because they do not receive a fair share of the retail milk price. We welcome the Commission's investigations into the food chain but, Commissioner, we want you to go further.

Will you commit to action that will root out supermarket abuse of their monopoly positions? Will you commit to a competitive market that allows producers a fair share of the cake, and will you commit to a functional milk market that gives a fair deal to farmers and a fair price to consumers?

I look forward to your response, Commissioner.

**José Bové**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, for months now livestock farmers have been warning the Commission and the Council of the gravity of the crisis. Tens of thousands of jobs have been destroyed in rural areas. The European Union had counted on growth in world demand. Its experts got it very wrong. The financial and economic crisis that we are experiencing has direct effects on agriculture and consumption.

The decision by Mrs Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture, to maintain the increase in quotas and the Council's wish to dismantle them by 2015 are a provocation to milk producers. Times have changed. European policy must be adjusted to suit a new global environment. The milk prices imposed on producers do not cover production costs. On each litre of milk, some small farmers are losing up to 30 cents. At the end of the year, many of them will not have made a single euro, or will even have lost money. Some of them, too, as we are told by regional officials, are today going so far as to take their own lives.

In the face of this unprecedented crisis, the European Union must take significant steps, quickly. We call upon the Heads of State or Government who are meeting this evening to prepare for the G20 to place the issue of the dairy crisis on the agenda for their meeting, so that appropriate steps can be taken to respond to livestock farmers.

The European Union must boost the negotiation capacities of dairy farms, so that they are no longer subject to the dictates of the agri-food industry. It should also put in place a safety net to guarantee a remunerative price so that the price never falls below the production costs. The European Union must put a stop to its export refunds programme. It has just committed the enormous sum of EUR 480 million, adopted with the backing of various parliamentary groups from both the right and the left, in order to sell its surpluses cheaply on the world markets. It is destroying hundreds of thousands of farming jobs in the south and is cynically pushing farmers to move off the land or to immigrate.

Above all, the European Union must immediately make drastic reductions, of 5%, in European milk quotas, in a way that is inversely proportional to the volume delivered by small producers, in order to swiftly re-establish a balance between supply and demand. A *laissez-faire* policy is unacceptable. It has terrible consequences in terms of employment and land use patterns.

Without the small farmers, there will be no Europe.

**James Nicholson**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, I feel very strongly that the Commission was very late in acting on this particular problem. They sat on their hands for too long, and many farmers have suffered grievously for that. We can either decide to help the industry, or we can decide that we will ultimately let our farmers go out of business: then we can import from abroad with all the problems that brings us.

I welcome your remarks for the future, Commissioner, but I am not happy about your remarks for the short term. I think we need to do more in the short term to help the industry through this present crisis. Those short-term measures require immediate action.

Of course I remember the time of the milk lakes and the butter mountains, and I do not want to go back to that. I do not think anybody in the industry wants to go back to that situation: neither the farmer, nor the processors, nor the Commission nor we in this Parliament. We do not want to return to that, but one of the main problems I see at this moment in time is that, while the farmers have taken a drastic reduction in what they are receiving for their milk, consumers are paying almost the same as they paid before.

Until we tackle the power of the supermarkets in this area we will not have the answer. They have to be controlled. We need an ombudsman, someone who can tell the supermarkets that they are acting beyond their remit, that they are ripping the people off, ripping the farmers off and putting them out of business in the process.

**Ilda Figueiredo**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) Madam President, once again I can only regret the positions adopted by the Council and what has just been said here by the Commissioner, who persists in not getting to the bottom of the issue and not recognising the need to review the decisions reached on the dismantling of milk quotas. Instead, she wants to continue deregulating the sector against the farmers' best interests.

We therefore insist on supporting the need to maintain the quota system, albeit with readjustments to adapt them to the needs of each individual country, including the scrapping of the annual 1% increase until 2015. Does she not believe that, at a time of such serious crisis in the dairy sector, what is more important than deregulation of the sector and liberalisation of international trade is support for agriculture and the dairy sector in the Member States, so as to promote rural areas and employment with rights? Does she not consider it essential to create an extraordinary support fund for the dairy sector at Community level, benefiting the most affected producers and countries, and to define new forms of aid for milk and meat production? I consider it necessary.

**Giancarlo Scotta'**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to stress my doubts about the proposal to extend the 2009-2010 intervention period for butter and skimmed milk powder, since this proposal is in danger of turning short-term measures designed for the current crisis in the market into structural measures that would actually restore the dairy farming sector to the position it was in before quotas were introduced.

In an effort to make the market measures more balanced, where benefits are not given solely to those Member States involved in butter and skimmed milk powder production, I call for the reintroduction of Community aid for private storage of cheese with a long maturation period.

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to the matter of the origin marking and labelling of dairy products and to the traceability of products: this is a request that comes directly from European consumers – in ever greater numbers – and one that might help us to tackle the crisis in the dairy farming sector. I hope that my fellow Members from the other groups, too, can endorse this proposal.

**Diane Dodds (NI)**. – Madam President, I would like to thank the Commissioner for her words to us today. In my country, in Northern Ireland, the dairy sector is of vital importance. When the dairy sector struggles, the rest of the rural economy struggles. Currently dairy farmers receive just over 20 cents per litre for milk amid escalating costs. In Northern Ireland not only have they had to contend with poor milk prices and high costs, but we have suffered a third consecutive wet summer and this has had a devastating effect on the dairy industry in Northern Ireland.

It was distressing last night to see farmers in Belgium so angry and feeling so helpless that they are spraying milk onto their fields in protest at the poor price of milk and the difficulties that they too are encountering. The Commission has taken welcome steps to put a base on the market but we cannot sustain prices at an uneconomically low level.

I call on the Commission to take short-term measures to help: measures that will increase demand for milk; measures that will cut the cost of production; measures that will address the supply chain with its decreasing farm-gate prices and high supermarket prices; and measures that in the long term will create a sustainable industry and a future for young farmers who are experiencing severe difficulties with low prices and high bank charges.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE)**. – Madam President, when farm women start protesting you know there is a serious difficulty. At the weekend I met a group of Irishwomen called 'Farm Women for a Fair Price' and I think we should note the words 'fair price' because producers are not getting a decent or fair price – and that is what this debate is about.

It would be churlish not to welcome the comments from the Commissioner about a stability coming into the market place, although at a very low level, and I acknowledge that the Commission has taken steps and spent money to bring stability to the market place. It is just that it is not enough and it did not happen quickly enough and we have a severe crisis.

I want to say that, in relation to the future, your comments are particularly welcome. I am worried that this House is divided on the issue of milk quotas because when we have codecision, if the Lisbon Treaty comes into force, we are going to have to think more coherently as a group and give clear signals to farmers rather than divided messages, so let me repeat that your comments about making links between producers and processors, about production levels, are something we need to explore, something we have to have a further debate on.

But we need to ask you, Commissioner, what type of market support measures do you think will exist in the absence of quotas that can ensure a fair and decent price to our producers? And, also, please tackle the marketplace: it is not working. Everybody says they are making no money from milk, including the supermarkets – which I doubt profusely – but we need more clarity, and we need fairness for farmers.

**Stéphane Le Foll (S&D)**. – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, I will be brief.

I think that there are two parts to this debate. There is the immediate question of how we can extricate ourselves from this crisis. All measures, ranging from assistance for farmers to intervention measures, are necessary – in fact, absolutely necessary. We must endorse them and even call for them to be enlarged in scope. That is what we, together with several fellow Members, are proposing here in Parliament.

Secondly, there is the structural question regarding the management of the dairy market, and this is where our views diverge from yours, Commissioner. You propose that we move in the direction of using contractual relations. I can tell you in advance that introducing contractual relations between industrial firms and farmers will, in the long term, result in those industries competing with each other, on a Europe-wide scale.

In order to regulate a market, we need public regulation. There is no other solution. After this crisis, that is what the debate must be about. I think that, in this debate, we must respect all opinions and all options; I fear that we acted too quickly at the time of the health check to settle an issue such as quotas, which up until now, as I would like to point out to all those who have spoken, have made it possible to maintain dairy production in Europe, to ensure that the dairy industry is highly developed and, at the same time, to keep prices at a level that was easily affordable for customers.

**Liam Aylward (ALDE).** - Madam President, in the last 12 months the majority of dairy farmers in Ireland and across the European Union have been selling their milk for less than the cost of production. The livelihoods of dairy farmers are under serious threat.

While the Commission's decision to extend the intervention period for butter and skimmed-milk powder until 2010 is very much welcome, short-term measures would not alleviate the pressure on dairy farmers in the long term. Actions must be taken now that will manage, not just the current difficulties, but are long-term and will ensure a sustainable and successful industry into the future. Financial assistance is required by dairy farmers immediately. The creation of an EU dairy fund of EUR 600 million, as called for by Parliament in the 2009 budget procedure, is urgently needed. Dairy farmers are entitled to fair prices, and an appropriate system of price supports is required to guarantee milk producers a reasonable minimum price per litre and a reasonable income for them to survive. Irish and European dairy farmers must not be forced out of business and I urge the Commission and the Council to take immediate and effective action.

Commissioner, may I say to you that you have been a very successful Commissioner, and I pay tribute to the immense work you have done. You have recently announced that you are stepping down, and I would urge you to solve, or to make as much of a contribution to solving this problem as possible, before your departure.

**Oriol Junqueras Vies (Verts/ALE).** - (ES) ¡Bon dia! I am addressing this Parliament without being able to do so in my own language, Catalan, which is spoken by over 10 million European citizens.

Today, on behalf of my Group, I want to express our solidarity with the whole of the agricultural sector, and in particular with the strike by milk producers and their actions across Europe. The current situation is unsustainable and requires a political solution. Clearly, the measures adopted to date by the Commission have been unable to alleviate the crisis or provide a viable alternative to the quota replacement scheme planned for 2015. As a result, in Spain for example – Galicia to be precise – 14 000 milk producers have had to cope with root-and-branch restructuring in order to continue living and working on the land, but today they are still on the verge of imminent disappearance.

For all these reasons, in the same way that the Commission has intervened in other sectors, it must also intervene in the milk sector, by regulating production, redistributing quotas, offering temporary compensation, encouraging product traceability and helping to bring producers and consumers closer together by correcting the dysfunctions caused by the distribution oligopoly.

Why has the Commission not positively intervened to prevent the negative consequences of this oligopoly established by the major distributors?

Why are we not guaranteeing the rural survival of our milk producers – and farmers in general – who provide extremely positive economic, social and environmental knock-on effects?

**Hynek Fajmon (ECR).** – (CS) – Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the crisis in the dairy produce sector shows that the entire European system of quota-based regulation is faulty and ineffective. What we need is not more regulation and manipulation of the quotas but the complete elimination of milk quotas. The opportunity to produce milk should go mainly to producers who have low costs and who achieve a profit. The way to overcome the dairy crisis is to eliminate milk quotas as quickly as possible. I support the Commissioner's attempt to eliminate quotas by 2015, but I would not be sorry to see them go even sooner.

**Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL).** – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, listening to your statement has increased my concerns even more. The statement is not a sufficient response to the scale of the suffering being experienced by milk producers and farmers in general.

The crisis is a structural one, and has not been caused merely by current circumstances, as you have said, but by the successive deregulations. That is why we are calling for an exceptional meeting of the European Council, in order to save small-scale agriculture.

The Council ought, firstly, to decide to set up an exceptional fund to provide assistance to non-industrial dairy production; secondly, to immediately set a minimum intra-European price that the central buying offices would be obliged to adhere to without any increase in prices for consumers; and, thirdly, to block national production quotas and put a stop to improper imports from outside the Community.

**John Bufton (EFD).** - Madam President, I have major concerns for the dairy industry in the UK. I feel that the biggest problem lies with the retail industry, which is making huge profits off the backs of our dairy farmers. When we see what the supermarkets are charging consumers for milk, and then look at what the dairy farmer actually receives, the difference is just incredible.

The work and the major cost in producing milk are borne by the farmer, but at the same time the supermarkets are reaping huge profits. The margin that the farmer receives is so unfair. We need to put pressure on the supermarkets to pay a fair price to the industry, and it is my view that the price of milk in the supermarkets will not have to change. The consumer will not have to pay any more for their milk. The supermarkets need to reduce their profit margins. It is quite scandalous when we see the massive profits that these supermarkets are enjoying every year and at the same time our dairy industry is struggling. If action is not taken on the issue in the very near future then I really do believe that many of our dairy farmers in Wales, and the rest of the UK, will go out of business.

I have one quick point on what the Commissioner said this morning about the super levy. I am concerned by those comments. I think it will hit our most efficient producers – those who have risen to the challenge, responded to the market and invested heavily in their farms, following a lead from the Commission that quotas will be abolished. Imposing a super levy goes against the structural changes which both the EU and the UK Government claim to support.

**Dimitar Stoyanov (NI).** - (BG) Madam President, the Commission is in an extremely upbeat mood again, bearing good news, but I fail to understand and cannot see anything good in thousands of tonnes of milk being thrown away in protest at the policy currently being pursued.

The truth is that Mr De Castro and the other previous speakers are quite right in saying that the Commission and the Council did not do enough during the health check to prevent this crisis. Incidentally, where are the representatives of the Council who should be taking a stand on this issue, seeing as the Council holds the deciding vote in any reforms?

My Eastern European colleagues and I on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development warned on several occasions that we needed a much greater increase in quotas, or their total removal, because our countries, being new to the European Union's systems, were the first to feel the impact of the crisis. Unfortunately, we have remained a lone voice in the desert, and the fault for this lies with Parliament.

I deeply regret that we pro-reformists, who really wanted the agricultural policy to be reformed, have turned out to be prophets of doom. I hope you learn the lessons for the future.

**Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE).** – (RO) Many people have asked during this period, right from the start of the crisis, to freeze the increase in milk quotas. This type of measure would not only not provide a solution, but would be a mistake, at least from the following points of view.

First of all, there is no basic economic link between the increase in milk quotas and the fall in market prices. Quotas have increased, while production has fallen. I cannot see where the link is. The market itself offers the explanation for falling prices. I believe that setting fixed quotas would lead to a rise in prices over time. However, the beneficiaries will be, once again, not the producers, but the processors and retailers. If we want to limit production we should perhaps encourage producers to stop livestock rearing voluntarily, by providing incentives rather than measures which could distort the market. Assuming quotas are frozen, what is going to happen when, for instance, demand on the global market picks up again? What could European producers do? Because dairy production does not have a tap that we can just turn off and on...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

As I was saying, what could European producers do, assuming demand on the global market picks up again? Because dairy production does not have a tap that we can just turn off and on willy-nilly. If we were to cut



production now, farmers would obviously give up cow rearing, but it would be very difficult to replenish the livestock when we realise that what some people now imagine would be a good measure is, in reality, a big mistake.

**Ulrike Rodust (S&D).** – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, Council, I would like to begin by thanking my fellow Member Mr Capoulas Santos, who has made this resolution possible.

Today we are talking about our dairy farmers and whether we are going to leave them in the lurch or deal with them in an honest manner. I do not believe that we should leave them in the lurch, but should be honest in our dealings with them. Yes, short-term measures to overcome the crisis are urgently needed. Yes, intervention is perfectly acceptable for a short period if the price of milk has reached rock bottom, and additional subsidies, loans and funds to combat the crisis are justified. However, what is totally unacceptable is, firstly, to start up discussions about milk quotas again and, secondly, to reintroduce tax-funded export refunds for products supplied to developing countries. We abandoned this one way street in 2003 and I appeal to you to keep it that way for the sake of our dairy farmers.

**Britta Reimers (ALDE).** – (DE) Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the world economic crisis has thrown the global market off balance. As milk producers we are suffering the effects of prices having hit an all-time low. We are hearing over and over again that the adopted milk quota regulations should be amended. As a dairy farmer myself, I can only warn you against doing this.

The Commission's intervention measures have also succeeded in preventing milk prices from falling even further and the market seems to be relaxing. However, I do not think that this intervention is really a good means of achieving this, because it will result in stocks piling up which could burden a recovering market later on. I therefore call on the Commission to explain how it is going to deal with this problem.

**Richard Ashworth (ECR).** – Madam President, can I compliment the Commissioner on her vision for the future of the industry, and may I say that I strongly support her intention to abolish milk quotas. I think this is the right decision to make. I also welcome her proposals to meet this current crisis as a sensible and appropriate way to support producers through a difficult time.

There are, however, two points that I want to make. Firstly, in my view, the implementation of the super levy at this time would be inappropriate. It is a short-term, knee-jerk reaction. It will send all the wrong messages and it will only effectively penalise efficient producers who are making plans to stay in the industry for the long term.

Secondly, we need to recognise that there is little or no direct relationship between the price in the retail sector and the raw material price received at the farm gate. That is what I term a dysfunctional price-chain mechanism.

The major influence will always be the global marketplace, and we have to recognise that the global marketplace will always be volatile. I therefore urge the Commission in the long term to come forward with plans to ensure that there will be some sort of stability mechanism for the benefit not only of producers but also, of course, of consumers in the long term.

**Esther Herranz García (PPE).** – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, you ended your speech by saying that there is a crisis in the milk sector, and yet you started by saying that all possible measures have already been taken and that the situation is being sorted out.

You should know that it takes a wise woman to recognise that she was wrong. That is a saying in Spain, which could very well be applied to this situation. For months the milk sector has been suffering one of the worst crises in its history. Despite that, because the European Commission and certain governments – seemingly including my own, the Spanish Government – do not want to allow their arms to be twisted, they are refusing to go back on the decisions relating to the health check of the common agricultural policy.

Those decisions were taken without any thought for the fragility of this sector, and in a market context very different from the one that has developed since that compromise was agreed. It makes you think that the Member States did not want to see, or could not see, at that time, the storm that was approaching. The reform has very quickly become irrelevant, due to the major turnaround in the market, which demonstrates that the sector is totally at the mercy of price volatility.

The fact that major producers such as France and Germany – countries which, in absolute terms, obtained the biggest increase in their national production quotas in this agreement – are now the ones asking for a review of the health check decisions raises a lot of issues.

As I see it, the Member States were wrong and should have listened more carefully to the voices, including mine, which were calling for any final decision on the future of the sector to be postponed until 2011.

It is a shame that no one listened to us. Perhaps you should do so now.

**Iratxe García Pérez (S&D).** – (ES) Madam President, Commissioner, today's debate is vital so that we can express our concern about the crisis in the milk sector. We must sort out this situation, which is threatening the future of a large number of milk producers in the European Union.

This is a European crisis that must be tackled from a European perspective, with ambition and by using all available Community tools, something which the Commission at the moment seems incapable of doing.

Commissioner, you should not pass the buck to Member States so that they help whoever they can. We must find common solutions.

As a result, this Parliament has an important responsibility in demanding measures aimed at reinvigorating demand, and not only those measures indicated in the motion for a resolution, but also those available through the common organisation of the market.

Another important issue is the huge difference between the prices paid to the producer and the final price paid by consumers, something which affects not only the milk sector, but all agricultural and livestock products.

There are many men and women who, faced with the current uncertainty, need a clear and firm signal from us that the continuation of this activity will be guaranteed.

**Marc Tarabella (S&D).** – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner, yesterday in Wallonia over three million litres of milk were poured away by farmers disillusioned by the most serious crisis ever seen in the sector. They receive only 19 cents per litre. The crisis is caused by an over-abundant supply of milk, which is making prices drop sharply. Deregulation is encouraging volatility, and market conditions now are totally the opposite of what they were a short time ago.

Commissioner, please stop stubbornly hiding behind choices made last year and take into account what is really happening on the ground now!

The Council is also to blame, firstly for not being here to listen to the debate, but also for not taking decisions, because it is swayed more by purely national interests than by a European vision of agriculture.

The market is not working. There is over-production. It would be very simple to freeze the 1% increase in quotas, or to reduce the quotas immediately by 3 to 5%, because we urgently need to come up with some short-term solutions. Adopting this measure would kill two birds with one stone: we would give the producers a decent price once again and, by reducing production, we would reduce the European bill of hundreds of millions of euros spent on various interventions, including export refunds.

**Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D).** – (PL) The action that has been taken – I have spoken today to Polish farmers and Polish product manufacturers – indicates that there has been an improvement, albeit not a significant one as yet, in the situation facing the dairy sector, but that there has been no change at all in the very difficult situation facing Polish and European farmers. They still receive very little money for their products, below the viability threshold. This also applies to those farmers who have invested a great deal of money, including EU funding and loans. This situation is plunging them into further difficulties, and they are unable to meet their obligations.

In view of these problems, I would like to talk about the future. Today, we have to react to what is happening right now, but we also have to think about what lies ahead and plan our common policy to take farmers into account as well. At this juncture, I would like to repeat the following: the common policy in respect of dairy farmers needs to involve plans for sensible investments in this sector, so that we can avoid spending money which, as a result of increased production, will land us in the kind of trouble we find ourselves facing today. I also trust that all the political powers will reach an agreement regarding future quotas.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** – (HU) Those who have spoken before me quite rightly refer to the fact that we should not return to the quota system and export subsidies, but the policy which the Commission has pursued has completely failed. The crisis has not eased. This is why Mr Le Foll and I are proposing that we temporarily freeze the quotas, but only temporarily.

The new Member States are still at a particular disadvantage because of phasing-in, as we are receiving just 60% of the subsidies from the envelope in Brussels this year. As a counterbalance to this, the Hungarian government proposed increasing the quota-based subsidies, but the Commission did not respond positively to this suggestion or to the one from France, specifically from the French ministry, either. I finally call on my fellow Members to support the amendments from Mr Le Foll and his colleagues. We also support the proposal from Elisabeth Jeggle in favour of creating a EUR 600 million dairy fund and the extension of the school milk programme.

**Christel Schaldemose (S&D).** – (DA) Madam President, thank you Commissioner for a good start – and a good introduction to the debate! I recognise that Europe's dairy farmers are facing a crisis on a major scale, but I simply do not understand how my fellow Members can think that you, in the Commission, have not done enough. I would definitely like to call on you, Mrs Fischer Boel, to reiterate what you have done. It seems to me that the list of initiatives coming from the Commission is a long one, in fact it is almost too long. It is almost as if we are destroying the progress that we made in connection with the health check. I would also like to point out that the efforts that have been made thus far on behalf of the dairy farmers have clearly not been mirrored in relation to those workers in the car industry who have lost their jobs or those workers in the shipbuilding industry who have lost their jobs as a result of the current economic crisis.

So I can only ask that we take a little care about how we handle this crisis and that we also make sure that we do not destroy the sound progress that was made, despite everything, as a result of the health check. The idea of freezing the milk quotas is, I think, completely hopeless! Nor can we go back to the old models by granting export refunds – that simply ruins the market for someone elsewhere in the world. We have to be careful. Commissioner, I would nonetheless like to ask you to reiterate the long list of activities that you have already undertaken so that my fellow Members can see that there is certainly no need for us to go crazy and start enacting numerous additional measures with the result that we destroy the sound progress that has been made.

**Georgios Papastamkos (PPE).** – (EL) Madam President, Commissioner, the measures are without doubt inadequate. We propose other, more targeted interventions, especially for the mountainous and disadvantaged areas of the European Union, so that all the Member States benefit equally; interventions such as reinforced protection for designations of origin, not just inside the European Union, but on the international markets, clear labelling and mandatory indication of the origin of dairy products, the reactivation – and why not – of private storage of dairy products and provision for satisfactory aid, an increase in eligible destinations for export refunds, full transparency in the supply chain and a reduction in the gap between producer and consumer prices.

We are not the mouthpieces for the farmers' interests. We are here to convey the anxiety, the cry for survival of the creative forces of the European countryside, and that cry for survival from the people in the European countryside is for us a standing instruction to act.

**Michel Dantin (PPE).** – (FR) Madam President, Commissioner – I would have liked to have been able to address the Presidency of the Council too – ladies and gentlemen, as you yourself acknowledged the other day, Commissioner, to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the price paid to dairy producers no longer covers the current costs of production. What that means is that our producers are in the process of decapitalising.

Just now, you listed the measures you have taken in the past nine months. Those measures do exist, we will grant you that. They have not, however, produced the anticipated effects because, in our view, they are not extensive enough, and there is definitely too much uncertainty about how effective their target is.

This morning you mentioned a recovery in the market, but the producers will certainly only see the effects of this in the payments made at the beginning of next year. The agricultural products market is not the same as the market in metals or the energy market. It calls for regulatory tools, because the cycles of the seasons and nature also have an effect on market conditions.

Your interpretation of the health check, carried out under the French Presidency, surprises us, since the interim assessments that it produced in relation to the dairy sector leave all avenues open, including the possibility of new decisions on tools for regulating the markets.

The French delegation, to which I belong, is convinced that a renewed quotas system will be necessary after 2013. The tension that existed on the food products market prior to the current economic crisis has demonstrated the fragility of the balance across the world between production and consumption.

After having partially dismantled the intervention tools, we have neither the right nor the legitimacy to dismantle today the production tools that we will need in the short term.

Commissioner, we must give farmers back their dignity: these are men and women who are not afraid of hard work.

### IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

*Vice-President*

**Antolín Sánchez Presedo (S&D).** – (ES) We cannot allow the milk sector to collapse. It is vital for our rural world, and for food security and quality.

Futures markets and the medium- to long-term prospects of the milk and dairy products market in the European Union are showing positive signs. We must prevent these falling into a negative situation. We need anti-cyclical actions and joint initiatives.

The collapse in prices clearly shows the inadequacy of support measures. The distortions in the dairy farming market mean that each supply chain cannot function effectively or fairly.

Producers are suffering price drops which are unbalancing the market, not being passed on to consumers and delaying the sector's recovery. This must be corrected. We must ensure fair competition and also reinforce traceability during marketing.

**Riikka Manner (ALDE).** – (FI) Commissioner, you mentioned that there is no longer any question of a return to the quota system. Have we not seen what happened in the dairy industry after the Commission decided in the spring gradually to withdraw these quotas? That was a very poor and short-sighted decision. The complete withdrawal of quotas will deal the deathblow to many small farms. Is this the sort of policy that the Commission wants to implement? The fact is we need a restrictive system for the dairy industry. If quotas are out of the question, I would appeal to you, Commissioner, to ensure that the Commission proposes other solutions to resolve the crisis. This is a European crisis and we have to implement an agricultural policy that guarantees at least a reasonable standard of living for farmers, regardless of country and region.

**Yannick Jadot (Verts/ALE).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, I am an elected representative from a region in the west of France, where there is a very high concentration of dairy farmers, and I do not believe that you have acknowledged the tragic social situation they are experiencing today.

Commissioner, when you speak of 'producers', what I hear is 'manufacturers' and 'distributors'. Dairy producers do not need your compassion, Commissioner. They do not need the outmoded liberal theories that have drawn us into an unprecedented world crisis. Dairy producers need a genuine agricultural policy. They need strict quotas. That is why we are calling on the Council to overturn your policy and instead to create a genuine policy to support dairy producers and to put an end to this policy of destroying them en masse.

**Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR).** – (PL) Mr President, Commissioner, our debate really has taken place in the shadow of dramatic events related to farmers spilling milk in protest. We are all deeply shaken by what has happened.

I wanted to refer to a problem that was mentioned by my colleague, Mr Nicholson, namely the way in which large commercial chains and supermarkets have abused both their consumers and, in particular, their suppliers. I would like to remind you that the European Parliament, during the 2008 parliamentary term, adopted a written resolution - I was one of the co-authors - on the need to put an end to these abuses, and for the Commission to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter. According to my information, action has been taken, but the process seems to be too slow. I would like to ask whether the Commissioner is interested in this matter and, generally, what the future prospects are in relation to these kinds of activities.

There is something really wrong with the economic policy of the European Union, as farmers receive less than 10% of the value of their products. This has to change. I would like to ask the Commissioner to take action on this issue.

**Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL).** – (CS) Commissioner, you see as progress a 3% - 8% increase in the price of finished products such as skimmed milk and butter. In my view, this is an insult to our farmers. The main problem is the price at which milk is purchased from farmers. In the Czech Republic, for example, the purchase price is up to 25% lower than the production cost, but the price of the finished product which is then sold in the shops would easily cover all the farmers' costs. The main problem, therefore, is that there is a large hole somewhere. This problem has to be resolved. In the Czech Republic we now have fewer cattle than we had after the Napoleonic wars. This is now even putting at risk the upkeep of rural areas. Mr Bové is quite right and Mr Fajmon profoundly ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Krisztina Morvai (NI).** – (HU) Mr President, emergency measures are obviously needed, as the situation is disastrous. But is it not possible that the problem lies somehow with the basics? Surely there is a problem with a model or system where a huge quantity of soya is imported from Latin America, for instance, thereby increasing the oversupply in Europe while destroying the environment in Latin America. In the ensuing crisis, we then rack our brains about whether we should export agricultural produce to the developing world at dumped prices, therefore ruining the market over there, along with the situation of smallholders and producers. Do we not need a new model, such as food sovereignty, instead of imposing on agriculture the free-trade logic dictated by the WTO? My second question is the following. We are asking for specific advice or a proposal on how ... *(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Astrid Lulling (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, we saved the banks, because we had to. Now we are faced with a situation where we need to prevent thousands of farmers from going bankrupt in the short term because prices no longer cover production costs.

However, we must ensure that we maintain our production potential in order to supply the population with high quality foodstuffs. I belong to a generation which experienced food rationing. I remember having to cycle eight kilometres in the winter of 1944 just to get two eggs. It will hopefully not come to that, but security of supply – not only in the energy sector – is also important.

If we are not prepared to take the measures that have been called for in our resolution, the cost in terms of the social, economic and environmental policy consequences in the EU will be many times what ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Ricardo Cortés Lastra (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, as the European Commission stated in its communication of 22 July, the situation in the dairy farming sector has deteriorated dramatically during the last 12 months.

However, taking into account the huge impact of the crisis on dairy product prices, and in particular on the income earned by producers, the measures proposed to date by the European Commission and debated by the Council of Ministers have been inadequate to counteract the fall in demand and its consequences.

The current crisis is not only giving us the challenge of reversing the fall in demand, but also an opportunity to encourage the consumption and promotion of dairy products. We must also ensure that the indisputable quality of the initial product is maintained intact until it reaches the end consumer.

In this respect, actions such as improving labelling, increasing milk consumption among certain groups of the population or using milk to feed calves may help not only to improve the current situation, but also the whole structural situation in the sector.

**Mariann Fischer Boel, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, first of all I would like to thank Members of Parliament for this very dedicated debate. I have actually listened very carefully. But of course I have also noted the different views that I have heard among the different Members of this Parliament.

As regards the quota system; it seems to be the scapegoat of this whole situation in which we find ourselves. I do not underestimate – and I have been very precise on this since the very beginning of the discussion – that the dairy sector, not only in Europe but globally, finds itself in an unprecedented crisis. That must be

very clear. So I certainly do understand the frustration that I see among farmers in different parts of Europe, not all over, but in different parts of Europe.

The abolition of the quota system was decided back in 2003 so it is not a decision that was taken overnight while nobody knew what was happening. Then, in the health check, we had the discussion on increasing the quotas to try to find a soft landing for the dairy farmers.

But I think that those who want to point their finger at the quota system for being the reason for all the problems in which dairy farmers find themselves are wrong. Because we see that even with a quota system in place, we have not been able to maintain high prices and the structural changes in the dairy sector have taken place anyway. If you look at 1984, when the quota system was introduced, we had 1.6 million dairy farmers in the old EU-10. Today in EU-10 we have 300 000 dairy farmers: less than one fifth of the number of dairy farmers today compared to 1984 with a quota system in place. So these structural changes are taking place anyway.

I do not think that going back or rolling back the decision in the health check is the right policy, and here I am supported by all heads of state saying clearly in their decisions from the meeting in June that I have to stick to the decisions from the health check. I have never, ever, during the health check discussions, signalled any openness to roll back these decisions because that would certainly jeopardise predictability for farmers within the European Union.

But, José Bové, I think you said I had not been acting with preciseness; that is, the *laissez-faire* attitude. I do not think it is fair to say that we have been doing nothing. I am not going to repeat all the different measures that we have been taking. I think that, if Member States want to pay specific attention to the dairy sector, they now have the possibility with the health check to reallocate the direct payments so they give a special preference to the grassland areas. That is a possibility and I know that at least one big Member State has taken the opportunity to use this possibility, and for the mountainous areas there are lots of different possibilities.

We have production in Europe today that is 45% below quota, so what would happen if we actually wanted to cut quota by 5%? We would actually damage the situation for the young farmers that have invested in the future.

Therefore, I would recommend to those countries, those Member States, who really want to help their dairy sector that they use this buy-up of quotas from those who want to leave the dairy sector. That is a much better way of securing the maintenance of those who have invested while giving a helping hand to those that want to leave the sector. That is I think the right policy.

Could I then just correct the misunderstanding on the super levy? We are not introducing a new super levy system. We are just giving the possibility that, if Member States are buying up quotas from farmers, they can reduce the number of kilos or tonnes from their ceiling, but it is not a new super levy that will punish any of the farmers.

Just on some of the promotion. We have already reserved EUR 14 million for promotion for the rest of this year. We have agreed on extending the school milk scheme; yogurt that is low in sugar – that is, containing no more than 7% sugar – will now be introduced into the school milk scheme. Labelling – I hear from different Members of Parliament that there is interest in a labelling system. Let us discuss that in the context of the quality paper that is actually on the table at the moment. So I think there are lots of possibilities.

Then, finally, on the food chain, I completely agree with you that that there is no transparency in this chain and we cannot see where the added value is disappearing. Therefore, I am looking forward to the presenting of this report before the end of the year so we can see what the situation actually looks like.

I must say that, if you look at the supermarket situation all over Europe, there are huge differences. Germany has a tradition or number of discount supermarkets. These supermarkets are using dairy or milk products, drinking milk as a *produit d'appel* to get the consumers in, and they are offering a very low price but they are just handing over the bill to the farmers, paying them the low price. So, I think it would be very interesting and necessary to see what is actually happening in this chain, so let us get this transparency on the table and let us, internally in the Commission, but also in Member States' competition authorities, look into the market.

It has been a very interesting discussion here today. I hope that you have noticed the short-term measures and the long-term measures that have been worked out together with France and Germany. I am sure that we will have some very interesting discussions on the future of the dairy sector in Europe because we all want our dairy sector to have a future.

**Paolo De Castro, author.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank the Commission for deciding to come here to Parliament today to present new proposals on the crisis in the dairy farming sector. It is important for the parliamentary term that has just begun to be characterised by an interinstitutional dialogue between the Commission and Parliament, a positive dialogue, which has in fact already launched the codecision process.

We will assess your new proposals very carefully, Commissioner, and it will be my job to ask the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development to issue an opinion on the new ideas immediately, without delay.

May I conclude, however, by pointing out that, if the amendment adopted unanimously within the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development is also adopted by this House in plenary, it will become a political problem if the Council, after the ratification of Lisbon, should then vote it down. I therefore invite you, and the Council, to give it serious consideration.

**President.** – To conclude the debate, I have received seven motions for resolutions<sup>(1)</sup> pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 12.00.

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

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), in writing.** – (PT) I come from an outermost region, the Azores, where milk production is the pillar of the economy, society and the environment. In recent weeks we met with the producers, their organisations and the processing industries. They all agree. It is crucial that the Commission should give a more effective and urgent global response in order to tackle the current situation.

Cash flow in the sector is drying up. It is vital that the outermost regions be looked at particularly carefully by the EU and be included in its responses to mitigate the effects of the current crisis.

They are all of the opinion that we need to stop the increase in quotas. In a market thrown off balance by surpluses, any country that increases its production harms all the others. They also believe that we should continue to maintain quotas as a supply regulation mechanism that stabilises their activity.

In the current scenario of total liberalisation, its social, environmental and economic effects on these regions need to be urgently studied. Specific measures must be designed to prevent the collapse of this activity, which is responsible for our beautiful countryside, the quality of our environment and rural areas, and the economic progress and convergence that we have been achieving.

**Béla Glattfelder (PPE), in writing.** – (HU) The current dairy market crisis has been caused mainly by raising milk quotas. The European Commission and Member States' governments are also responsible for the current grave situation affecting the dairy sector, as in 2008 they supported raising the quotas, resulting in the creation of milk surpluses and the collapse of prices.

This decision was based on the European Commission's erroneous market forecasts. However, the European Commission did not abandon its intention even when it became obvious that the production increase was contrary to market trends.

This is why the European Union must immediately drop its measures leading to an increase in dairy production. Furthermore, we also oppose the permanent removal of quotas after 2015. The important lesson to be learned from the current crisis is that the dairy market needs to be regulated. Without this, prices will become unpredictable. European dairy producers cannot endure the losses caused by large-scale price volatility.

I am pleased that, with a view to easing the crisis, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development voted in favour of my initiative, which would raise the export subsidies amount from EUR 450 million to EUR 600 million. Without the export subsidies some of the surpluses would remain on the EU internal market, which would lead to a further price decrease.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See Minutes.

**Jim Higgins (PPE)**, *in writing*. – Milk quotas need to be cut by between 5 to 10 per cent in order to push prices back up to a sustainable level. But quotas alone will not save the dairy sector. While the Commission is correct to adopt a long-term view, it cannot detach itself from reality - and the stark reality is that the agriculture industry, in particular the dairy sector, is in real danger. The lowest milk prices since 1983, together with high costs, poor weather and lack of credit, have created an unprecedented cash flow and income crisis for dairy farm families in 2009. While the indications are that markets have bottomed out, badly needed price increases still appear some way off, and EU action is needed. I agree with IFA President Padraig Walshe and Dairy Chairman Richard Kennedy that the quickest way to speed up price recovery is for the EU Commission to make more aggressive use of all market supports such as:

- Export refunds
- Processing aids
- Extended full-price intervention
- Longer private storage scheme for butter
- Careful handling of stocks

**Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FI) Mr President, last year the situation in the dairy sector declined dramatically. The producer price for milk fell, and at present many milk producers are having to sell dairy products at a price that does not reflect production costs. The survival of milk producers is now seriously under threat. Up until now it has not been possible to resolve the crisis in the dairy sector with the measures the Commission has implemented. Now it is time to roll up our sleeves and come up with new solutions. The Commission must stabilise the dairy market in Europe quickly. At the same time it should also undertake a thorough evaluation of the future of the dairy industry together with actors in the sector and the Member States. Thank you.

**Véronique Mathieu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) In order to tackle the particularly difficult economic circumstances currently confronting the dairy sector, strong action by the European Union is now urgently required. In common with the majority of the Member States, I believe that the solutions put forward by the Commission are unsatisfactory. Of course, I welcome the flexibility that it is permitting, which will enable the national aid ceiling to be increased from EUR 7 500 to EUR 15 000 for producers who are struggling. It is nonetheless vital for us to adopt more effective intervention tools. In order to deal with the growing volatility of prices, our markets must be regulated to a greater extent. The joint statement made by 16 Member States on the state of the European dairy market offers the Commission some valuable suggestions on improving the regulation of dairy markets. I also believe that it is necessary, as seven Member States are requesting, to look at temporarily suspending the increase in quotas. I would also like to reiterate my support for the introduction of a 'Dairy Fund' to help producers' organisations and cooperatives, and also to support agricultural investment, modernisation, diversification of dairy farming, measures linked to geographical location and marketing measures for dairy products.

**Ivari Padar (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (ET) Observing the present situation in the dairy market, it is clear that our sector is still largely unprepared to cope with the consequences of the global economic crisis. As a result, the development of the common agricultural policy should continue to be aimed towards improved competitiveness and, in the long term, less market management. Giving the common agricultural policy a 'check-up' is a step in the right direction, and maintaining the same direction in discussions of the common agricultural policy after 2013 is the only way to strengthen the sector.

**Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) We are currently going through the deepest crisis in the dairy sector, triggered by the global crisis, which is basically a result of a discrepancy between demand and supply. The fall in the prices of milk and dairy products primarily affects farms with low incomes. For this reason, I do not think that the quota system ought to be frozen in all Member States, but each state ought to decide how to set their own quotas. The problem is that, compared to 1983-84, only one-fifth of producers have remained in the market, and we are now at risk of more farms closing down. We therefore need to adopt urgent measures to prevent this from happening. We ought to take the following measures to end the crisis in this sector: extend the measures envisaged for storing butter, milk powder and cheeses, speed up the creation of a dairy product fund to meet the needs of small producers and young farmers, and reach an understanding with the supermarkets in terms of setting a fair price for both agricultural producers and retailers.



### 3. Energy security (Nabucco and Desertec) (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Commission statement on energy security in relation to the Nabucco and Desertec projects.

**Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, energy will definitely continue to be the focus of this Parliament for the next five years. At the same time, we have made good progress over the last five years in establishing a robust European energy policy with three goals: security of supply, sustainability and competitiveness.

In achieving all these goals, the external dimension is extremely important for two reasons. Firstly, EU import dependency – currently, 50% of energy resources come from outside the European Union, and the trend is upwards.

Secondly, issues related to sustainability. The climate change goals cannot be achieved anywhere in the world unless energy is produced more cleanly and used more efficiently. For this reason, dialogue with the producer, transit and consumer countries is crucial.

The two projects mentioned in today's plenary are, in a way, complementary and at the same time fit well into the overall strategy.

First of all, Nabucco. I came from Baku yesterday, and we are definitely still on course to fulfil this project. We made a major breakthrough this July. An intergovernmental agreement was signed between four European countries and Turkey, which means that we could already take a final investment decision next year with a view to having gas supplies by 2014.

We have identified three sources that are ready to commit gas volumes. Firstly, there is Azerbaijan, where the final investment decision about Shah Deniz 2 should be made in the very near future, and then there are other fields, in Turkmenistan and Iraq, which at this stage are the biggest sources of supply.

Where are the difficulties? There are always difficulties related to the particular way we operate in the energy field and how a lot of producer countries are organised. In the European Union, projects are industry-driven, which means that there is always a very clear calculation of all the commercial risks. The countries that have the resources would expect more forward-moving decisions. That means, for example, the EU decides to build a pipeline, it builds a pipeline, and then we commit the gas. The philosophies are different. At the same time there is a clear understanding that EU companies are ready to buy the gas, and we are moving forward towards it.

I believe that the transit issue is more or less solved. We are still awaiting the ratification of the intergovernmental agreement, but I would not expect too many difficulties. Also, to facilitate buying gas from regions that have particular ways of selling gas, we are developing the concept of a 'Caspian development corporation' that would allow for reduced risks for companies buying gas, for example at the Turkmen border, or investing in areas where the political and economic risks are quite substantial.

We are well on track, and I believe this is a good example of cooperation between industry-driven projects with political support from the EU institutions.

We have also committed some funds for the southern corridor and particularly for the Nabucco project. We have launched a call for proposals. At this stage I cannot say whether this was successful or good enough but at least the invitation was made.

Desertec is also an industry-driven initiative that is currently at an initial stage. It sounds very interesting that we use the solar energy potential of Africa and transport it to the European Union, but we need some flanking measures for this project to materialise.

First of all, there is the technological development that we have supported for many years. A large concentrated solar power plant will be inaugurated this month in Seville. This is one technology that could be used for this Desertec project, and I believe that we would not have advanced so far in this technology without EU support.

Secondly, we need to work with partners because it is very clear that we cannot just say we will take your territory, we will put solar panels in and transport electricity to the European Union. There should be common ownership of these projects, if they are to happen at all. For this reason we will have a conference in October

on using renewable sources together with countries from the Mediterranean and the Gulf. It is clear that for Desertec to be successful we need common ownership of these projects, otherwise there will be no successful outcome.

Last but not least, there is definitely the issue of interconnection. There are two types of interconnection that we need to separate. One relates to the philosophy and markets. We have supported the integration of markets in North Africa for some time. Progress has been made, but we need to strengthen these measures. The second type is physical interconnection with the European Union, using cables.

I believe that Desertec will come step by step. It will not be one big project but I believe there will be elements that could ultimately fit our objectives: clean energy for the countries involved and additional exports to the European Union.

We have also provided for commercial incentives. With the Renewable Energy Directive we have established the possibility for EU countries to invest in third countries and transport electricity to the European Union, and then the goal will also be fulfilled with energy produced in the third country.

That said, it is definitely difficult at this stage to give any timetable for Desertec. It is a new initiative, which is still in its infancy, and we cannot say Desertec is part of our security of supply strategy. It is a promising move towards a climate change strategy that we need to promote, but Nabucco is there for security of supply, and it is too early at this stage to rely on Desertec.

I would like to conclude that the best security of supply measures we can take are inside the European Union. This House has been a very strong supporter of energy efficiency. Energy efficiency is not only to do with climate change. It really is a very important element in the security of supply. I would say it is more important than Desertec and Nabucco, plus even South Stream and Nord Stream, combined. It really is the biggest element. Three legal instruments are being discussed with the Council, and I would emphasise that we need to be ambitious and successful with these.

On renewable energy, I am very grateful for the support of this House for the recovery plan, and I am quite positive regarding what I have heard about the applications for offshore wind energy. It seems that all the funds that were committed to support offshore wind energy will be committed. This is not only EU money because the overall envelope was roughly EUR 600 million, but the overall size of this project is EUR 4 billion, so industry is investing most of it. I believe this is a very good combination, as renewable energy also gives security of supply.

Last but not least, I know that sometimes there is an issue about carbon capture and storage (CCS). CCS is usually needed for two reasons. One is as a global response to climate change but, from another point of view, we will also use coal and lignite for our security of supply. There has also been very good progress on applications for the financing provided with the recovery plan, so the recovery plan was successful, in my opinion. After announcing the results, we – the Commission, the Council and Parliament – definitely need to review how to channel EU funds to strengthen the European Union's security of supply. Many other steps will also definitely need to be taken to strengthen the security of supply of the European Union.

**Ioannis Kasoulides**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, we all agree to speak with one voice and have a common foreign policy on the security of energy supply.

It is acknowledged that the energy mix and energy supply differs among Member States according to geography and other distinct factors. So, diversification also covers supply.

A diversified and interconnected network can, if appropriately redirected, one day become the security of supply for all. We support the need for a southern corridor, and Nabucco is a common European project.

However, questions need to be answered on the recent agreement between Mr Putin and Turkey, on the quantity of gas from Azerbaijan vis-à-vis the investment, on Gazprom's offer to buy all Azerbaijan's exports, on the stability of Iraqi supply, and on the Russian promise to pump double the amount through South Stream.

The energy dialogue with Russia is a necessity based on the pragmatic and equitable principle of security of supply and security of demand. All other geopolitical considerations must be set aside.

On solidarity, we need tangible plans for emergencies, such as storage and new LNG technology. Cyprus, for example, invests half a billion euro on LNG, and I regret that the Union assists with only EUR 10 million.

**Hannes Swoboda**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you for your report. The question of security of supply for our citizens is becoming ever more important. In this context in particular, your portfolio will play an even greater role in future – and it will be important for the European identity, too.

As you quite rightly said, diversification is also necessary. I absolutely agree with Mr Kasoulides that cooperation with Russia will always be important, as it is an important partner with regard to gas supply. However, we should not be too dependent on any one country, whichever country that may be, but we should diversify, and Nabucco is a good way of going about this.

My third point concerns the solidarity that is needed in the EU. You have presented a number of proposals as to how we should increase our solidarity and also how the role of the EU as a mediator in conflicts that affect us, in particular between Russia and Ukraine, can be strengthened. You also talked about Desertec. I believe both projects are important, as they differ in terms of their timescales.

We also need to consider – and that would be a task for your successor, whether that is you or someone else – how we in Europe, on the one hand, can be in favour of a number of large projects, such as Nabucco and Desertec, while at the same time advocating the decentralisation of some of our electricity and energy production.

There are currently a number of industrial projects under development – which are also industry-driven – which enable consumers and even households to become more involved with a type of energy production that brings energy security. This ranges from smart meters on the one hand to actual production by individual households. In this regard, Europe's approach could be to say 'yes, of course we need an external supply, we need security of supply and large, innovative projects like Desertec, but we must also ensure that the people, the companies and enterprises as well as individual households can have greater control over their energy budgets and energy consumption in terms of price, the economy and the environment'.

**Johannes Cornelis van Baalen**, *on behalf of the ALDE group*. – (NL) Mr President, it is an honour, as a newly elected Member, to address this plenary session for the first time. I do so also as a former member of the Lower House of the Dutch parliament and Deputy President of Liberal International, as I aim to see European politics, national politics and international politics as one. In the field of energy, in particular, there is, of course, a direct connection between these forms of politics.

Mr President, when it comes to our position, Europe's position, in the world, we are currently open to blackmail. We are dependent on unstable regions and countries with undemocratic regimes. This has to stop. That is why my group, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, supports Nabucco and Desertec, and I would like to draw attention to the major role that the former parliamentary leader of my national party, Mr Van Aartsen, has played in this project.

Mr President, there are two points that I want to make. I am pleased that the Commission accepts that business has an important role to play. It cannot be just the authorities – national government, Europe or international bodies – that are involved in energy. Business emphatically does have a role to play. Secondly, Mr President, we in this House should not accept taboos such as those on looking into nuclear power again, as part of our energy mix. This also applies to Europe in international relations. Nuclear power, nuclear fusion and nuclear fission are of vital importance. There are major problems in relation to waste, but we must ensure that we allow research and development and knowledge exchange to play their part in this regard. Nuclear power has a major role to play because it will help combat the greenhouse effect. Once again, my group, too, does not have a definitive view here. We, too, need to open up this discussion again, but we must not declare nuclear power a taboo in this House. I would therefore like to hear the Commission's opinion on this.

**Reinhard Bütikofer**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as we are talking today about external energy security policy, we are, of course, aware of one particular fundamental truth, which has already been mentioned by Mr Piebalgs, and that is that the crucial front line in terms of energy independence is within the European Union. To put it more precisely, if we could introduce low energy standards or zero energy standards for our buildings then we would save more natural gas than Nabucco, South Stream and Nord Stream combined could import. It is important that our resolution states that the cost-effective options of renewable energy, the energy efficiency strategy and energy saving in particular must be a central part of this policy. If that is the case, then no additional nuclear power will be needed at all, in our opinion.

Secondly, an important message in this resolution is that we need a common external energy security policy for the EU, which is something that we do not have at the moment. This policy should include the promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy within the framework of a neighbourhood policy and a common position to be taken by the EU in negotiations with the transit countries. The Commission should make sure that it has sufficient capacity for this, as called for by Parliament two years ago in its resolution on this issue.

In our view, Nabucco is a high priority project, because it would strengthen our independence in terms of energy, particularly with regard to Russia, although I agree with Mr Kasoulides when he said that there are still a lot of questions that need to be answered in this regard. However, it is a pity that some Member States, through their promotion of the South Stream project, which is openly competing with Nabucco, have been undermining the policy of energy independence.

With regard to energy policy, we in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance also believe it is important not to forget human rights and to neglect the human rights dialogue when we discuss energy. When we broaden our perspective to include Desertec or even the Arctic – as we do in our resolution – it is also important that we do this in a spirit of partnership rather than neo-colonialism.

**Geoffrey Van Orden**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, I have three brief points to make.

Firstly, complacency over energy policy is putting us increasingly in the dangerous position of dependency on Russia. Where possible it clearly makes sense to coordinate our response, but any unified EU policy would inevitably be skewed by those countries that are already in bed with Gazprom and related interests. And we should not be handing yet another area of vital national interest to the European Commission, which sees every possible crisis as an opportunity to extend its competence. Needless to say, many of us will vote against any endorsement of the Lisbon Treaty or further efforts to take forward political integration on the back of the various energy concerns of our countries.

Secondly, diversification of sources of supply requires greater commitment to Nabucco. For the success of this pipeline, Turkish cooperation is essential, yet the opening of the energy chapter in EU negotiations with Turkey is being blocked. What are the Council and Commission doing to resolve this unhelpful situation?

Thirdly, I notice the word ‘nuclear’ does not appear in the resolution. Clearly, sustainable, diverse sources of energy supply require a greater commitment to nuclear energy and in that respect I agree with our colleague Mr van Baalen.

**Helmut Scholz**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, energy security is quite rightly on the external policy agenda today. However, instead of securing power and influence and the last reserves of fossil fuels, instead of insisting on giving priority to dependency, we are, in my opinion, facing completely different challenges when it comes to establishing a sustainable energy policy.

Firstly, there needs to be a global switch to more renewable sources of energy, more energy efficiency and energy saving. In other words, we do not need disputes about external energy policy – and certainly not if that is all we are going to do – but rather we need intelligently-provided, affordable energy for everyone.

Secondly, energy security must be part of a responsible peace and development policy for the EU. Access to energy is vital for every individual, for economic development and for the fight against poverty. A project like Desertec must not therefore be a way of using energy policy as a means to continue colonialism. What will the people of the African countries, where the population is growing and energy requirements are rising, get from this? Why have they not up to now been involved on an equal footing in the planning and decision-making processes?

The global energy supply is also part of crisis prevention and peace policies. This approach is also lacking in the European Union's relations with the South Caucasus and Central Asia. As energy suppliers – for example Nabucco – these countries are becoming of more and more interest to the EU, but I see no conflict prevention and sustainable development concept at a local level in these countries. It is time that the EU put an end to an external energy policy that merely increases competition for oil and gas reserves or extends nuclear technology. Genuine partnerships for renewable energy and for decentralised supply are what is needed now.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we know for certain that demand for energy will increase and that European gas production is on a steady decline. It is crucial for the Member States, and therefore Europe, to implement policies to ensure an abundant, secure supply. Diversifying the sources and the transport networks fulfils this requirement.

On that basis, no competition exists between the various projects under way, such as, for example, Nabucco and South Stream. These diversification policies have also meant that, over the last few years, Europe has become less dependent on the main suppliers. For example, the supply of Russian gas to Europe has gone down from 75% in 1990 to 45% today. The Nabucco project is therefore fine, and the South Stream project is fine.

Until Europe has a single, common energy policy, Italy has not only the right but also the duty to take action in every way possible, from energy saving to nuclear ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Zoltán Balczó (NI).** – (HU) On 13 July in Ankara, at the time of signing the Nabucco agreement, Mr Barroso said that the gas pipelines were made from steel. However, Nabucco is ‘cementing’ relations between the people involved in this venture, establishing a strategic link between the European Union and Turkey. Prime Minister Putin said that anyone can lay as many rusty iron pipes in the ground as they want, but they will need something to fill them up with. It is precisely the uncertainty about sources that is the biggest concern with this project. The only thing for sure is that the EUR 8 billion investment will be a good deal for those involved in it.

In actual fact, just like the concerns caused by Ukraine, the transit country for the Russian delivery, Turkey may similarly cause problems. There are also many of us who do not agree with establishing a concrete link between Turkey and the European Union. What is Desertec all about? North Africa, revolving mirrors, solar cells, continuous-current transmission and meeting 15% of energy requirements. At the moment, this is much more of a mirage than a realistic plan. Desertec will not be the main course on the European Union consumers’ menu. It is much more likely to be just a very expensive dessert. This is why I am suggesting that we get involved in research into increasing the safety of nuclear energy, because this type of energy is clean and cheap as well. This is a serious consideration because energy security stops with the consumer, or rather the bill and whether he can pay it.

**Elmar Brok (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, energy is a vital lifeline for the whole of society, for individuals and for the economy. It is therefore important for us in Europe to find common solutions, although it is certainly right for the energy mix to remain a national responsibility. This means that during our joint deliberations we do not need to fight over nuclear energy, low-carbon energy and other types of energy, where my opinions differ from those of Mr Bütikofer, for example.

However, we must try to reach a common position where the external aspects of energy security are concerned. As regards internal policy, I fully agree with the Commissioner that the issues of renewable energy and energy saving, for example, are more important, as is research into new possibilities.

However, in order to reduce our dependence on external suppliers, we need to diversify. Desertec and Nabucco are important instruments in this regard. We also need to negotiate with Russia in connection with issues relating to the partnership and cooperation agreements and energy security now that Russia – wrongly, not rightly – has withdrawn from the energy charter. This is also an important task for us. However, we must recognise that we are dealing with countries that are not necessarily reliable and that, unfortunately, we cannot make a distinction between reliable and unreliable countries.

We must therefore counter supplier power with the consumer power of the European Union. Interconnectivity, the issue of common gas stores – these things are important to ensure that the supply to any individual country cannot be shut off. If we all help each other, we will be so strong that no one will be able to disconnect us. That is the crucial point that we need to get across here.

In this regard, we must also make it clear that private investments are necessary, because the situation will be impossible without them. Much has already been done, but our overarching common security interest must be brought into line with economic interests in order to achieve the best possible solution. That should not be seen as a contradiction. I believe that we will then indeed find an appropriate solution. It means that matters relating to competition law also need to be considered here, and by that I mean that it should not be the power of large suppliers, for example Gazprom or even other companies ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Teresa Riera Madurell (S&D).** – (ES) Mr President, I want to highlight the timeliness of this motion for a resolution and also welcome the effort made by all groups to achieve a joint motion.

Ladies and gentlemen, in order to prevent the reoccurrence of the situation of helplessness suffered by many of our citizens when Russia decided to cut off the gas supply through Ukraine, it is clearly vitally important to maximise the diversification of energy sources and gas transport. In this respect, we urgently need to build new gas pipelines, which, like Nabucco and other projects, will help to improve security of supply in Central Europe. However, to ensure a supply in all European Union countries, these efforts must be supplemented by supplies from the south of the continent.

Having said this, I want to underline, as the Commissioner has already done, another dimension to this problem. The recent crisis showed us that the EU did not lack gas stocks, but rather transmission capacity. That is why it is important to focus our efforts on improving interconnections within the EU. Ladies and gentlemen, you should believe me when I say that there is a great deal of room for improvement in this situation.

I will give you the example of my country. As you know, Spain could become an important transit axis for Europe, thanks to its connection with Algeria via the Medgaz pipeline, which is already in an advanced stage of construction, and its six liquefied natural gas plants, whose capacity could be doubled if another emergency situation were to occur. However, Spain cannot help without improving its interconnection capacity through the Pyrenees.

Lastly, we should be aware that the construction of major infrastructures is only one part, albeit an important part, of the EU's security of supply policy. This security also particularly depends on energy saving and the use of renewable energies. It is in this context that we regard as vital our cooperation with the North African countries in the development of renewable energies. This is linked to my call to reinforce the supply from southern Europe.

As a result, Commissioner, the Mediterranean Solar Plan, led by the Union for the Mediterranean, is an attractive idea that we in this Parliament want to support.

**Graham Watson (ALDE).** - Mr President, we have three great challenges in this area – security of energy supply, the inefficiency of our internal market in energy and the imperative of combating climate change. Desertec and Nabucco are central to meeting these challenges.

If we succeed in developing high-voltage solar thermal power in North Africa, we can give a sense of purpose to the Union for the Mediterranean, we can assist in water provisioning in the countries on the southern Mediterranean rim and we can develop electricity generation technology, for which there is a massive world market. If we can convince Member States of the political need for greater energy independence, and stop Berlin and Paris from undercutting it at every turn, Nabucco can help us diversify our supply of oil and gas.

The motion for a resolution before us today says little about what we need to do here in the European Union. We need to develop renewable energy production – solar thermal and other. We need to build high-voltage DC electricity distribution capacity through a smart grid – some EUR 50 billion of investment, but creating many jobs – and we need oil and gas storage facilities and, even more, a storage policy to reduce our dangerous dependence on Russia.

Our energy provision will continue to rely on oil and nuclear power but, as we prepare for the World Climate Change conference in Copenhagen, the only big idea is the switch to renewables. Wind could meet all the new electricity demand in China in the next 20 years and replace 23% of their coal generation. Deserts get more energy from the sun in six hours than humankind uses in a year. Commissioner, you said this is not part of our strategy for security of energy supply. Well, it should be, and it must be.

**Franziska Katharina Brantner (Verts/ALE).** - Mr President, energy security is for us to a large extent a question of energy independence, as many have said, and, as Mr Piebalgs said correctly, the most effective strategy is that of efficiency, savings and renewables.

But we, as Greens, are also realistic and realise that, in the medium term, we will need gas supplies. Therefore, we are in favour of diversification and also see the Nabucco project as a European priority project.

But let me say why we do not believe that a nuclear strategy is a strategy of independence, certainly not of energy independence. After all, uranium is imported, and not only from countries we like. And, if we speak about security, we have to mention the security implications of nuclear energy, namely nuclear proliferation, and we see the problems that we have with that in other very high-profile security issues. We cannot neglect that, and we cannot say that nuclear energy is completely separate from the question of nuclear proliferation.

In addition, our group strongly believes that all projects have to address concerns about transparency and corruption and cannot stand in the way of a frank and strict human rights dialogue with the cooperation countries, as well as a holistic and political approach to these countries.

#### IN THE CHAIR: PÁL SCHMITT

*Vice-President*

**Konrad Szymański (ECR).** – (PL) From the moment when the agreements on the construction of the Nabucco and South Stream projects were signed, a great race began. Time will tell whether Nabucco will play its part in the European Union's foreign and security policy. That is why I am surprised at the European Commission's policy towards Russia with regard to this matter.

The Commission is gravely mistaken in thinking that South Stream is not a rival project to Nabucco. The Commission is wrong not to react to Gazprom's further encroachment onto the European energy market. Moreover, the Commission is wrong to agree tacitly to the implementation of Gazprom's projects in the Baltic and the Black Sea.

Nabucco will only be successful if it receives long-term political guarantees. That is why we need active policies in Central Asia, in the Black Sea region. Creating links, in terms of the energy sector, between these countries and Europe will strengthen their sovereignty, improve European security and perhaps even open the door to the reforms we anticipate will take place.

If Afghanistan constitutes a test for NATO, then energy security is certainly a test of the European Union's mettle and maturity. The success of these plans depends solely on our political will. Amendments to the treaties are a lesser issue.

**Jacky Hénin (GUE/NGL).** – (FR) Mr President, the independence of our region's energy supply and the security of energy installations and consumers ought not to go hand in hand with defiance of the interests of the peoples of the gas-producing countries and the transit countries, otherwise we risk generating conflict. Competition between gas pipeline projects is not only a source of trouble, but is also a factor in tensions in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Removing gas and other energy sources from the serious problems caused by the speculative markets, through tariff agreements that respect the producer countries and the transit countries, and that provide security to European consumers, would make it possible to guarantee security all round.

That could be the task of a European Energy Agency supervised by Parliament and the Council, whose sole policies would be cooperation and promoting the public interest. Why, then, do we have the feeling, in this case, that commercial interests prevail over the interests of the European people?

I would also like to issue an official warning to the Commission to avoid the temptation of using the Nabucco project as a Trojan horse for obtaining Turkey's accession to the EU by forcible means. Respect for secularity, for women's rights and for the rights of the Kurdish people, as well as acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide, must remain the criteria by which Turkey's potential accession is decided.

**Niki Tzavela (EFD).** – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, you are known for your pragmatism and sense of realism, but I would say with all due respect that I do not see the Nabucco pipeline as final or as quite such a given. Having examined the capacity of this pipeline, we have established that, in order for it to be viable and efficient, it needs 31 billion cubic metres of gas a year.

You have just returned from Azerbaijan and you feel certain that it is a supply country. Azerbaijan promises everyone gas. Where it will find the gas to fill the pipeline is a question which continues to distress the countries involved in the Nabucco pipeline. So far, Baku is saying 'I'll give you all gas', but it is not in a position to guarantee even its safe transit. As for Iran, to which you referred Commissioner, it will have stormy and possibly explosive relations with the European Union for a long time before it becomes a gas supplier.

The international energy market is saying that Russia is behind the Azeris and that we shall find ourselves face to face with them. My question is, before you commit financially, can you please secure our supplier?

**Martin Ehrenhauser (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, Nabucco was Giuseppe Verdi's first hugely successful opera. In harmony with the new Italian-Russian remix, South Stream, the energy project of that name is, however, in danger of being scrapped. When we consider that a supposed member of the Green party like Joschka

Fischer has signed a lobbying contract for a six-figure sum, then the entire composition sounds more like a pointless pop song aimed at a limited market than a symphony of sustainability and economy.

Over the next few years, electricity produced from solar energy will become significantly cheaper. The entire investment could be used to generate a total of 8 000 megawatts of wind energy. If natural gas fields in Iran and Iraq are also to be closed to Europe, then we will probably experience the same fate as Verdi himself, as he did not find peace for years after his Nabucco project either.

**Pilar del Castillo Vera (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, thank you for being very clear in your explanation of the current situation in relation to Nabucco and its potential and viability – seemingly in the short term, according to what you said – and also for the information on the Desertec project.

There can be no doubt that the Sun is an extraordinary source of energy. Converting this energy into energy that can be used by people is an area which has seen major developments in the last 20 years. However, there is also no doubt that we still have a way to go before the full potential and viability of this source can be technologically assured, particularly in projects such as the Desertec project which we are now discussing. This project is very welcome and we must therefore support it and keep moving forward in order to solve the technological problems.

However, I must really draw your attention to the fact that, when talking about energy efficiency, and particularly about security of supply and therefore diversification of energy sources, one particular energy source is ignored to a certain extent. I am of course talking about nuclear energy. This energy source is systematically being discriminated against, because it does not fit with what is happening in many EU countries or with global trends or with mankind's current energy needs.

This situation must be turned on its head. We must adopt an attitude of considering all possible energy sources in terms of the role that they can play. Here in this Parliament we cannot so obviously turn our backs on this reality.

**Kristian Vigenin (S&D).** – (BG) Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it is no coincidence that the issue of energy policy and energy security comes up quite often in this House, particularly following the situation early this year when several members of the European Union were virtually left without gas supplies. This was probably the breaking point in relations between the European Commission and the Member States as a whole regarding this issue.

What we are now discussing is not so much the technical questions and details of developing energy policy within the European Union as the external aspects of energy security and the European Union's development in this sphere, because at the end of the day there are two sides to this issue. It is, after all, an important question, as it ultimately affects every single citizen.

We must be clearly aware of this when discussing Nabucco, which is undoubtedly one of the highest-priority projects in this sphere, along with Desertec. We must also be clearly aware that there are countries in the European Union which rely not only on a single supplier, but also on a single supply route.

I therefore cannot accept that Nabucco will pose a challenge to projects such as South Stream and, to some extent, Nord Stream, whose aim is to supply gas directly from Russia to a European Union Member State, thereby ensuring that the European Union is not dependent on transit supplies through countries which are both politically and economically unstable.

In this respect, the European Commission is right to declare that there is no challenge posed, and that we have to try to integrate all these separate projects into a common strategy where, I stress, Nabucco is obviously a major priority.

We expect the Commission to come up with its own proposal for increasing gas reserves within the European Union, which is very important, and for developing an interconnection system between Member States with a higher capacity, which is also a very important element in guaranteeing security both for citizens and for business in the European Union.

We should not, of course, underestimate the issue of energy efficiency, which is another important element in our policy of guaranteeing energy security for the European Union.



**Fiona Hall (ALDE).** - Mr President, I want to thank the Commissioner for reminding this House that there is also a demand side to energy security. The decision to take incandescent light bulbs off the European market will save the equivalent of the annual electricity generation of Finland.

This autumn we are seeking agreement with the Council on a package of energy efficient measures. Forty per cent of the energy we use is consumed in buildings, so it matters a great deal for the future of energy security that we set high standards of efficiency for both new and existing buildings. I hope that Member States in the Council will support the Parliament's proposals, which are designed to put a stop to the utter waste of energy which is currently used in heating, cooling and lighting. If nothing else, Ministers should support those proposals out of self-interest because it will considerably ease their job and their responsibility of keeping the lights on and the gas flowing.

**Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE).** - Mr President, we have three main concerns with Nabucco. The project is being developed too slowly and in a lacklustre way, and we do not like the Commission's position, reiterated by Mr Landaburu a week ago, which stated that the Commission is neutral between South Stream and Nabucco. The Commission should be in favour of Nabucco.

Secondly, we wish the Commission to become more active vis-à-vis those Member State governments that time and again seek to gain a competitive edge and advantages at the expense of other Member States. I will not mention those countries today other than to say that one has a capital called Rome.

If we do not move quickly with Nabucco we will witness unpleasant events similar to those in Hungary where the Surgutneftegas company obtained a critical amount of shares in the Hungarian company MOL. A similar situation also prevails in Baumgarten, Austria.

Otherwise, Mr Commissioner, we wish you good luck in creating the common energy policy still missing in the EU.

**Sajjad Karim (ECR).** - Mr President, Europe's future depends on securing energy. As both the Nabucco Agreement and the Desertec initiative show, Turkey is an essential gateway, and in this regard I echo Mr Van Orden's point. It is critical at this time to be building greater trust and deeper ties with countries who will be our energy partners, including Middle Eastern and North African states. In relation to many of these there is a connected development issue. With Desertec the mass generation of electricity from solar power is a unique opportunity for revenue generation, which must be used for the benefit of their people also. This opportunity must not be squandered.

Unfortunately, some Member States – including my own – have not used the recent past to prepare a coherent energy strategy. My own constituency, the North West of England, has been identified as a prime area for wind power generation, and yet the UK's planning laws are an obstruction. Whilst we must look outward for future energy supplies, Member States must also make the best use of the resources and potential they already have.

**Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL).** – (PT) Mr President, I have been listening carefully and would just like to raise three issues. The first is: what are we actually talking about when we talk about energy security and energy? Are we talking about people – people for whom we must guarantee equal access to energy and guarantee security so they are not left without energy during the winter; are we in the end talking about the power relations between great powers; or, worse still, are we using energy security and these projects, like Nabucco or Desertec, as excuses to send out messages to other regions of the world or other countries? If it is to send out messages, with what moral authority are we doing so?

The second point I would like to make is that, whenever we speak out against non-transparent transactions by foreign entities within the European market, we ask the Commission to take immediate action. I would like to know how this request of ours stands in relation to non-transparent transactions on the European market by Europeans themselves. To finish, Mr President, I would like to make a third point. I just feel we have all missed a great opportunity to have a medium- and long-term policy. We chose the short term and, once again, we have been left with a strengthening of the interests of the internal market and of the big industrial companies.

**Herbert Reul (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it is not before time that the security of supply is recognised as a key energy policy issue. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as it is sometimes made to appear in political debates. We are talking today about two projects: Nabucco, a very

tangible project that we can work on, and Desertec, an interesting project or an interesting idea or a vision and no one can yet judge precisely whether, where and how it can be put into effect.

We need to concern ourselves with concrete matters and work on those. We must also promote visionary projects, but we must guard against believing that there is only one solution to any particular problem or only one strategy for solving the problems. Thus, the point made by many fellow Members here is absolutely right: there is not just one answer, there are many solutions to these problems.

These include, for example, the fact that we must not allow a very intensive debate on the CO<sub>2</sub> problem to make us increasingly dependent on gas, which then brings us problems once again because we need new pipelines. We must say 'yes' to the coal policy, and that is why we need new power station technology. We must say 'yes' to CCS, 'yes' to nuclear power and to renewable energy and 'yes' to energy saving. It is not a question of one thing or the other, but of doing all of these things together. Anything else would, in my opinion, be immoral and irresponsible and I believe we would not be doing ourselves any favours.

This also relates to the question of the source of supply and transport routes. Here, too, there is not just one answer. Anyone who believes that they can simply rely on a debate about pipelines is mistaken, of course, for if we want fewer dependencies we must keep a variety of options open, including LNG, and set about dealing with these. The question then remains – and it is a very important question – as to how we ensure that the necessary capital is made available to implement the required projects. What is the use of wonderful plans if there is no one willing to invest in them?

Therefore, the way in which we pursue our energy policy and how we deal with those who we expect to invest in the projects is important. Companies must be encouraged. We must guard against believing that we can force everything to happen and predetermine every last detail. Last winter many solutions worked without any political decisions being taken because clever people cooperated wisely in different places and because the Commission provided helpful mediation.

**Marita Ulvskog (S&D).** - (SV) Mr President, it is, of course, unacceptable for people in Europe to be without power in the middle of winter or for people to be forced into unemployment because the industries in which they work are unable to pay the high energy prices and are therefore forced to lay people off or even close down their operations. It is therefore extremely important for us to take wise decisions in order to safeguard energy supplies.

At the same time, the requirements made of the large infrastructure projects that are needed must be clear with regard to both environmental impact and the countries' independence. Member States must not be placed in a situation where they are at risk of being at the mercy of another state. The environmental impact analyses must be carried out by reliable and independent bodies before large projects are allowed to get underway.

This of course applies to all of the large projects identified, but I would like to mention the Baltic Sea in particular, which is a large and sensitive inland sea. We need analyses and decisions that guarantee that the Baltic Sea will not be turned into a dead sea because we in the European Parliament did not have a sufficiently long term view and were not demanding enough when we took our decisions. We owe this to our children and grandchildren.

**Adina-Ioana Vălean (ALDE).** - Mr President, everyone wants energy security, so why do we not have it? Maybe it is because there are 27 interpretations of what energy security means.

Personally, I interpret it as meaning, among other things, diversifying the sources and moving away from our gas dependency on Russia. We do not have to look too far for evidence of this, just at some of our Member States which, being too far from Russia to have a pipeline, do not have all the problems attendant on dependency.

I think we should focus on LNG, developing technologies, building LNG terminals and bringing gas from all over the world. We should also contribute to establishing a global market for LNG such as there is for oil and commodities.

Concerning the Nabucco pipeline, I think the project should be quickly redesigned to take into consideration gas from various sources, and reconsider a shorter route which might lead from Georgia, Ukraine, under the Black Sea to Romania. We just have to look at the map.

The fact that Member States have different interpretations of, or interests in, energy security is also proven by the fact that some countries involved in Nabucco have also signed up for South Stream, thereby lowering Nabucco's credibility and the chances for a common European energy policy. South Stream definitely means increasing dependency on Russian gas.

**Paweł Robert Kowal (ECR).** - (PL) Listening to my fellow speakers, I wonder whether the citizens of the European Union are doomed to merely listen to our words. It is something we could have tested in January of this year, during the energy crisis. After all, we are adopting resolutions as we all feel that the Union is not coping with the issue of energy security. We also note, Commissioner, that there is less interest in Nabucco among the EU Member States, although this is not the case for all energy projects. In the north, we have the Nord Stream project, which is a very serious move against the common foreign policy. In the south, there is the South Stream project. Here, too, the EU Member States are keen to get involved. However, when it comes to Nabucco, all we hear are promises, but there is neither sufficient money nor political support.

While we are discussing the subject in Strasbourg, the cement mixers have arrived on the shores of the Baltic to work on the Nord Stream project. I would like to know whether I can hold supporters of the Treaty of Lisbon to their word, namely that when the Treaty is ratified, they will cease to support the Nord Stream and South Stream projects. Nabucco may prove to be an excellent step towards ensuring energy security. If we continue to merely issue statements then, during future energy crises, when we send EU citizens pamphlets containing our resolutions, they will burn them.

**Gabriele Albertini (PPE).** - (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I agree with Commissioner Piebalgs. His statements just now confirm that South Stream is not Nabucco's competitor but a further contribution to the diversification of Europe's energy supply sources. Europe's energy security is based on a variety of sources, routes and supply countries.

At zero growth, future demand for gas is estimated at an additional 100 to 150 billion m<sup>3</sup> by 2020. Based on these assumptions the development of different options is imperative, and South Stream is not an alternative to Nabucco, but in fact complements it. The Commission regards the southern corridor as a series of projects including Nabucco, South Stream and the Turkey-Greece-Italy interconnection (ITG). The anti-Russia debate is therefore in conflict with what we will see happening over the next few years.

The European Parliament must call for pragmatism and above all consistency in the decisions that the European Union has essentially already taken: with the European economic recovery plan, with Decision No 1364/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down guidelines for trans-European energy networks, and with the second energy security strategy.

The diversification of sources, routes and supply countries is the real pillar of Europe's energy security policy and, leaving aside the political and economic interests of the various countries most directly involved, the South Stream-Nabucco challenge must be analysed with realism, not through the distorting prism of ideology but rather with a clear vision of what needs to be done.

**Anni Podimata (S&D).** - (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, if we are to address the problem of our energy security in a reliable and viable manner, we need a global strategy which responds to the need to differentiate energy sources and adopt common rules in terms of transit countries, because our dependence on a single energy source is as bad as our dependence on a single transit country.

We therefore need a balance and that will not be achieved either by adopting a cold-war tone of voice towards Russia, on which we are or will be energy-dependent anyway, or by supporting a single alternative pipeline, namely Nabucco, at a time when there is still uncertainty about its supply capacity and the political and economic conditions in the countries on the Caspian Sea and in the Caucasus.

As for Desertec, I agree with many of the objections formulated and I want to add this: the strategic objective of the European Union must be to gradually make ourselves independent of energy imports, not to replace imported natural gas with imported electricity from renewables.

If we really want to become energy self-sufficient and independent in the long term, we need to promote energy efficiency and make the best possible use of renewable national energy sources.

**Toine Manders (ALDE).** - (NL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to congratulate you on your integrated approach in this proposal. This diversification is very important and I would also like to concur with what my colleague Mr van Baalen said, namely that we need to consider all

forms of energy, including nuclear power. Yet – and this is something I learnt at primary school – the Sun is the source of all energy and I believe that we must focus on the Sun in future.

When it comes to diversification, it has to be about not only the types of energy, but also the suppliers. Many of you have spoken about Russia. So far, Russia has always supplied us when we have asked it to, but in the future it will be important to have more suppliers. Next, how can we guarantee energy security? We can only guarantee it if we can also get our energy supply via the networks and I believe that your most important task – you have negotiated a number of obstacles, Nabucco, Desertec – in the coming years will be to realise an integrated network where the countries involved, all the EU Member States, are pulling in the same direction and are also willing to implement energy policy in an integrated way. You can ask institutional financiers, private investors, for the money, but I believe that you need to start working on an integrated network right away, a kind of *supergrit*, an induction loop for Europe capable of reaching every end-user.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, energy is not an area over which the European Union has jurisdiction. Mr Piebalgs, congratulations on all that you are doing.

Energy and access add up to war - sometimes in military terms, sometimes in political terms, and sometimes in economic terms. As for gas, we are going to have a gas war. We will not know, moreover, if gas is the cause of the war or a consequence, but in any case we will have a gas war.

We know the figures: in the countries of the Caucasus, there are two centuries of reserves; in Russia, one century; in North Africa, half a century; in the Baltic, half a century; and in Europe, about 20 years. We must therefore prepare to import gas.

Yes, Commissioner, Nabucco is a sound project, and we must support it, but we must give financial and political support to all the diverse sources of energy supply, both Nord Stream and South Stream, from the North and from the South.

We must also rely upon our industrial companies, which are competent and fair, and which have an ethical code, but let us not be naive. Commissioner, I urge you to study, straight away, the proposals by certain Member States that would like us to have an operational European instrument for taking action on the gas market, that is, to create a European central buying office for gas, something which you are, moreover, doing for the Caucasus with the Caspian Development Corporation.

With regard to Desertec, I would like to offer my congratulations. We know the figures: 1 km<sup>2</sup> of desert receives the equivalent of 1.5 million barrels of oil. This is an excellent project for the Euro-Mediterranean area. We know that 0.3% of the planet's deserts could supply the entire world with energy.

We know that we will solve our energy problems through human ingenuity and science, but in an ethical and moral way.

Commissioner, you are doing a very good job, because we have here a Europe that produces results, a Europe that protects, and a Europe that acts. Well done, and please continue – you will have the support of the European Parliament.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D).** – (LT) The 'Nabucco' gas pipeline would allow Europe to feel strong and safe. However, not all countries in the Caspian region are following the road to democracy and not all can be trusted. Much depends on relations with Turkey. Even if, for the time being, there is no prospect of opening the door to that country's membership of the EU, we must not push it away and not provoke anti-European feeling there. The Desertec project is especially significant in that it points to the future. When discussing energy security, too little attention is paid to renewable energy sources and, in particular, energy efficiency. I am pleased that this is exactly what the Commissioner underlined today. Financial and economic mechanisms should be established at EU level, which would encourage EU Member States and individual companies to save energy and switch to the newest and cleanest technologies and this would be a serious contribution to energy security and to combating climate change.

**Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (PPE).** – (LV) Mr President, Commissioner, as a Latvian politician, I know very well what it means for a state to be energy dependent. Although Latvia generates about one-third of its energy needs from its own renewable resources, the remaining two-thirds of our energy balance-sheet comes predominantly from one supplier state – Russia. As a small country heavily dependent on energy supplies, we understand very well how expensive this dependence can be both for the end-consumer in terms of price and for the country as a whole in terms of potential political vulnerability. The energy balance-sheet of every

European Union Member State is different, but we are all concerned by one and the same question – the security of energy supply. Security of supply can be achieved by diversifying sources of supply, for the more suppliers we have the less dependent are we on each individual supplier. Russia is an important partner for the European Union in terms of gas supplies. In Europe, we import in total about one-quarter of all gas consumption from Russia. Some countries, such as Latvia, are even wholly dependent on supplies of gas from Russia, and with every year Europe's overall dependence on supplies from that country is tending to increase. One of the alternative sources of supply is the projected Nabucco pipeline, which would deliver gas from Central Asian countries to Europe, via Turkey. I consider it very important for Parliament to give special support for this project, for it will directly strengthen our common gas supply security. The Nabucco pipeline, however, is only the start of the solution for our common gas supply security. We have to achieve a united European energy policy that would coordinate our activity across all energy issues. Thank you for your attention.

**Edit Herczog (S&D).** – (HU) Mr President, first of all, allow me to express my thanks that I can speak in Hungarian in this House, which allows me to greet the Vice-President in this language. I would like to begin by saying that, if we look back at the last five years, Commissioner Piebalgs has probably become one of the most successful commissioners for the balanced, forward-looking policies which we have jointly accepted with Parliament up until now.

In January, at the Nabucco conference held in Budapest in Hungary, Commissioner Pielbaks stated for the first time that the European Union wants to offer political and financial support to the Nabucco project. We will have to raise an estimated figure of some EUR 8 billion for the 3 300-kilometre pipeline. The two most important tasks we have ahead of us then are to find some EUR 2 billion from the European Union budget and, secondly, to draw up those conditions which will make it easier and simpler for the project to access credit, and on better terms.

The original promise was for some EUR 30 million. We need to realise that we have to go further. I am confident that in the few months that lie ahead, the Commissioner will make every effort or leave it to the next commissioner to ensure the project's success. We are all very aware that in the event of an economic crisis, it is not households which bear the main brunt of current and power failures, but companies. We are talking, fellow Members, about those companies where our voters and our citizens work, and we are jeopardising their income by jeopardising energy security.

**Mario Mauro (PPE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, energy security is undoubtedly a fundamental priority that must be enhanced firstly by increasing energy efficiency and diversifying the suppliers, sources and supply routes, but above all by promoting the Union's energy interests in respect of third countries.

Now, the March European Council declared that, in order to achieve its energy security objectives, the European Union collectively, but also each of the Member States, must be prepared to combine solidarity with responsibility. This, in my view, is the crucial point: European energy policy must be inseparably linked to the Union's foreign policy, because, while we keep on saying that our foreign policy action will be truly effective when we speak with one voice, that is just as true for energy policy.

Yet that is precisely the point; until that time – that is, until we are able to speak with one voice – the efforts of many governments that are involved in complex operations such as Nord Stream and South Stream must be viewed not as in conflict with support for Nabucco but as part of the same strategy, in which we combine pragmatism with realism in order to put our citizens' interests first.

For that reason it is a definite 'Yes' from us to Nabucco, but just as definite is our decision to support the efforts made by our governments to ensure that diversification of supply guarantees the well-being of our populations.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) In 2008 the European Union posted a record commercial deficit of EUR 242 billion, mainly due to the increase in the price of imported energy. The Nabucco project pipeline will pass through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria and will provide the European Union with an annual supply of 30 billion cubic metres of natural gas from the Caspian Sea. The EUR 200 million allocated to the European economic recovery plan are insufficient. We call on the European Union to supplement the funds allocated significantly. Desertec will use solar power from North Africa and will also include the implementation of a Mediterranean plan for capturing solar power and the construction of an electricity transmission network, which will link the European Union with the Middle East and North Africa. The EU must invest more in the diversification of energy supply sources. As rapporteur for matters relating to the energy performance of buildings, I call on the EU to provide innovative financial instruments to boost

the investments in the use of renewable energy sources and in improving energy efficiency, especially for buildings and in the transport sector.

**Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE).** – (RO) Nabucco will provide for a large part of the European Union's demand for gas. However, what is even more important about this is the political aspect: it will eliminate our dependence on a single source. The recurring crises have highlighted that the current situation, with Russia as a single source and Ukraine as the only transit country, does not provide any security for Europe's economy and citizens. The development of new energy supply routes must be just as important as developing relations with Russia. The delay in launching the Nabucco project has been due, unfortunately, to the individual interests of certain Member States. Member States must realise that it is not only the countries which the pipeline passes through or the commercial companies involved which will enjoy the benefits of this project, but all Europe's citizens whose national governments must guarantee their well-being and safety.

The mistakes which have led to this project being delayed must not be repeated in relation to securing sources of gas. There are countries in the region, such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Iran, which want to supply the gas pipeline with their reserves. The Commission must repeat what it has done for the intergovernmental agreement, which is take part in the subsequent negotiations and reach a positive outcome as quickly as possible. If we do not get on and do it, others will, and I am very sure that it will not be in the interest of Europe's citizens.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, given the EU's dependence on external energy supplies, securing its supply is an issue which must always form part of the EU's external policy. In addition, all predictions agree that energy demand in the world will increase significantly over the next 25 years.

Here in Europe, we have to reduce our high dependence on Russian gas, particularly following the crises in recent years. There is also a clear strategy in Russia to secure its dominance in Europe over the gas sector. That is why we have projects such as Nord Stream, Blue Stream II and also South Stream.

We therefore need to diversify in terms of suppliers and routes. That is the reason for the interest in Nabucco, which will give access to Azerbaijani and Iraqi gas, and also to gas from Turkmenistan, thus reinforcing our energy relations with Central Asia, which is an increasingly important region.

I am therefore delighted about the agreement reached last July, as reported by the Commissioner, and also the explicit support given to Nabucco by President Barroso in the political guidelines that he recently presented.

I know that there are doubts about the viability of Nabucco, but I also had doubts about the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which is now a reality.

I must stress that the countries around the southern rim of the Mediterranean also have an important role to play in the supply of gas to Europe. The main country in this respect is Algeria, which is an important supplier of gas to my country and to Italy. We must ensure that the work on the Medgaz pipeline is quickly completed. I also want to highlight countries such as Egypt and Libya in terms of gas supplies.

To sum up, energy issues must be a priority in the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, to the benefit of both sides.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Treaty of Lisbon includes energy as a shared responsibility and lays down that one of the EU's energy policy objectives will be to guarantee the security of energy supplies. This really encourages us to move forward with developing an increasingly essential common foreign policy on energy, as stressed by the motion for a resolution to be adopted today.

I will end by saying that this is a difficult objective, as proven by our failure in Europe, in the European Union, to achieve a true internal market in energy, because we do not even have the necessary interconnections. That is why I am delighted about the commitments made in this respect in the document mentioned by President Barroso.

**Rachida Dati (PPE).** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, as my fellow Members have just said, the recent gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates the urgent need to increase the European Union's energy security and independence.

The European Union is still too dependent, particularly on its gas imports, since by 2020 it will probably have to import approximately 80% of its gas. This situation cannot continue, because if it does it will

permanently jeopardise the European Union's energy security. Clearly, the infrastructure projects in progress, which you have just alluded to, are a step in the right direction.

The recent gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine is already several months behind us. Commissioner, what about the coming winter? It is absolutely vital for those who have experienced shortages and those who fear them in the future to know how Europe will protect them from these possible new crises.

**Michael Gahler (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the present resolution makes clear once again the need to develop a consistent European foreign policy, including from the point of view of the security of energy supply.

A lot has already been said today regarding Nabucco and Desertec. As regards diversification of the sources of supply, I would like to draw your attention to a neighbouring region which up to now has been characterised by stability and reliability in supplying Europe and which also has a huge exploitation potential and will become more accessible as a result of climate change. I am talking about the Arctic region. Here there is, on the one hand, an existing tradition of pragmatic cooperation, including with Russia, for example, and, on the other hand, the EU as such does not currently have a presence there, unlike Russia, the US, Canada and even China.

In order to secure the long-term interests of Europe in this region too, I would therefore argue in favour of developing a pragmatic, long-term strategy, together with partners such as Norway and Iceland, with the aim of cooperating with Russia, the US and Canada to balance the various interests there, not only with regard to the common security of supply, but also environmental issues and access to the new ice-free transport routes. This will also avoid the potential conflicts which could otherwise arise there in the rush to secure the energy sources that are still available.

**Bastiaan Belder (EFD).** – (NL) Mr President, Turkey has an important role to play in reducing Europe's dependence on Russia. The question now is what price Europe is prepared to pay Turkey. In the meantime, Turkey is playing two hands and is seeking to benefit both from the Nabucco project and from South Stream. It is not in Europe's interests. I call on the Council and the Commission to make an unambiguous choice for the Nabucco project. This project would directly reduce our dependence on Russia and, given the slow decline in the demand for gas in Europe, it is in any case totally unnecessary to realise two southern supply routes. Turkey must nail its colours to the mast and put its weight fully behind the Nabucco project. The negotiations with Turkey on this topic should, however, be kept strictly separate from the country's accession negotiations. It should not be the case that Turkey receives an entry ticket for the Union in exchange for being cooperative.

**Lena Barbara Kolarska-Bobińska (PPE).** – (PL) The European Union needs suppliers whose business dealings remain transparent and who fulfil their obligations. The Energy Charter and the Transit Protocol are an attempt to establish a system based on clear principles. Russia's recent indication of its desire to withdraw from the Energy Charter Treaty should be viewed as a warning. It should be a warning for companies investing in Russia, as well as for the Commission. It should also encourage the Commission to take action, as soon as possible, to create a European energy security system.

We can only hope that Russia will respect the Charter and will not take any definitive action. The European Union's internal gas market has to operate without any restrictions, allowing cross-border connections and gas networks. European gas consumers cannot be left at the mercy of monopolies.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Matthias Groote (S&D).** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I very much liked what the Commissioner described here today with regard to the Desertec project. This project has huge potential and its appeal indeed lies in the fact that it is made up of many separate small projects. This will create jobs and will prepare the way for the environmentally sound industrial policy that we are striving for.

I have a question for the Commission. When you were talking about the Desertec project, I had the feeling that the handbrake was on to some extent. What concrete measures are planned with regard to network infrastructure, which is a massive problem in connection with the development of renewable energy? The idea is, of course, to transmit the electricity to Europe via high voltage direct current lines from the deserts. What supporting measures can the European Commission take with regard to this? Is something already being considered in this regard? What can we expect from the next Commission in this area?

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** – Mr President, the ECR Group supports the need for an EU common external energy security policy based on solidarity between Member States, but energy mix must remain a Member

State competence. We must, of course, diversify away from overdependence on Russian oil and gas, of which even the UK, traditionally dependent on the North Sea and Norwegian gas, is now an importer.

We must develop the southern corridor and should consider the White Stream project, in addition to the Nabucco project, as a priority, but also with trans-Caspian and even trans-Saharan routes as exciting future prospects for the European Union. We need better gas-storage capacity in Europe and more integration of our pipeline and electricity grids. In the UK we are keen on new nuclear power stations as well.

I welcome investment in renewables, including the Desertec solar project, which combat climate change as well as aid diversification. We also need better energy efficiency – though the recent EU ban on incandescent light bulbs is draconian, ignores the health hazards to the skin and the environment from the mercury, and makes the EU needlessly unpopular in my country.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras (PPE).** – (ES) Mr President, the predictions indicate that, between now and the year 2030, gas consumption in the European Union will increase by more than 40% and that our own internal production will fall. This means that demand will not be met, even with all the projects currently in hand. As a result, we need all possible sources of supply, and we particularly need to coordinate all the actions of the Member States in order to optimise their contribution to our joint needs.

The South Stream and Nabucco projects involve very important economic, energy, historical and political aspects. We must consider these very carefully, with great intelligence, and remain mindful of the concerns and needs of all the countries affected. Many of the problems that we are now suffering could be solved if we, firstly, decisively coordinated the actions of all Member States, if we built more liquefied gas terminals, if we improved the internal market and if, once again, we spoke with one voice.

**Derek Vaughan (S-D).** - Mr President, I welcome the text put forward today by the various political groups and the earlier statement by the Commissioner, particularly the recognition of the need to diversify our energy technology and to secure our supply.

But of course there is no one answer to ensuring our supply. All technologies must be considered. There has to be a mix, including CCS, and, of course, where I come from is Wales, which still has a plentiful supply of coal.

Energy efficiency must also be improved. That is why I believe we should be spending more of European Structural Funds on energy efficiency measures to save energy, but also to boost the economy.

I would also like to make two further quick points. Firstly, on Desertec, which I believe is an exciting project, but we have to recognise that it is a long-term project. It is not a quick fix.

Secondly, the storage of gas reserves is important, but again we need to recognise that it is expensive and funding will be required.

So, I support all the texts put forward today, particularly by the S&D Group, but these are important points and I would welcome the views of the Commissioner on those points.

**András Gyürk (PPE).** – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, the proposal for a decision mentions that the Russian company Surgutneftgaz, whose ownership is unclear, recently acquired a major stake in the Hungarian oil company MOL. I would like to say something more about this. I personally submitted a written question to the Commissioner following this transaction. He stated in his reply that he considered legitimate our demand to provide stronger protection for European energy companies against external acquisitions lacking any transparency. This is good news. We must also add that the current regulations are unsuitable for achieving this objective.

However, regulations on transparency can be easily circumvented. This is why we are asking the European Commission to abandon its convenient position of idle introspection. It should draw up, in cooperation with governments, the legal framework for providing effective protection against hostile takeovers. Mr President, the open market is a joint European achievement. Let us not make ourselves vulnerable precisely on this issue.

**Ivo Vajgl (ALDE).** - (SL) It seems that the 'catch-the-eye' system is working well and I am happy to hear that that is the case. We need a secure and diversified supply. We all agree on that.



However, I think that too much of our discussion today has centred on a single issue: on warnings of a Russian threat. Such talk can have no constructive consequences for Europe and I think that we would be much better served if we developed a partnership with Russia.

I would also be grateful if Commissioner Piebalgs could let us know what progress has been made in the dialogue on energy security, on improving our relations with Russia and on the implementation of democratic standards, which is something to which we would like Russia to pay greater attention.

**Andrzej Grzyb (PPE).** - (PL) In September 2007, on the basis of the decision of the European Parliament and the Council in 2006 and with regard to the matter of – amongst other things – the Nabucco gas pipeline, a European coordinator for the project was appointed, namely Mr Josias Van Aartsen. In 2009, he presented an interesting report, which contained equally interesting conclusions. One of these conclusions concerned the difficulties that may be encountered when implementing the Nabucco project. Even the current levels of funding point to this fact.

I would like to ask whether you think that, notwithstanding your personal interest in the matter, the appointment of a coordinator for the implementation of the Nabucco project might make its implementation more efficient, so that we may be sure that what we are discussing today, and what the Member States – including my country, Poland – also expect to happen, will have a 100% chance of becoming a reality.

**Andris Piebalgs, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, it would be difficult for me to answer all the questions raised, but I would like to emphasise a couple of points.

First of all, the policies we follow in the energy sector seek to promote the wellbeing of our citizens and our industry. What we are looking for is a secure supply of well-priced and clean energy. This is our overarching goal.

Secondly, we never make any side deals when we are discussing energy agreements. There are no compromises either on enlargement or on human rights. We work from the point of view that interdependence in energy supply is the most important thing and is beneficial for all – for suppliers, transit countries and consumers. It takes time to convince our partners, but that is the only way to achieve stability.

Thirdly, even if it sometimes seems that we are slow, I think that basing ourselves on the industry proposals, and on support for industry, is crucial because that makes us strong. Perhaps it does not make us a speedboat in the energy ocean, but it makes for stability. When we make a change, we have a much broader basis for it, so we are much safer. All the projects have been well checked for cost efficiency and future viability. So I believe that is the right support to give.

The next area where we have a weakness, and which we are continuing to discuss, is external energy policy and coherence. It is true that there is a lot of controversy – or at least perceived controversy – and, as a Commissioner, I would definitely be happy to see a more coherent external energy policy.

The motion for a resolution addresses exactly this issue because, although there is no in-built conflict between Member States, there is perceived conflict. All the activities pursued by the Member States also benefit the European Union. So we should follow this up and really try to build a system where we speak with one voice, not only verbally but also in terms of the points of view that we want to emphasise. For this reason the second strategic energy review is still very important. All the points that we put forward in the second energy review are still there.

At the same time, from the Commission's point of view, we clearly see that we cannot afford to move from interdependence to dependence. That is why we particularly support diversification projects like Nabucco and LNG – not that they completely change our relationship of interdependence with other countries, but they give us additional safety margins. So that is what we are doing, but at the same time we definitely take note of what happens in the energy world.

Regarding the point on nuclear energy, we have moved away from this option. We have adopted a Nuclear Safety Directive but it is very much a national and very sensitive point. I really believe that, from the Union point of view, we should build upon the cooperation of nuclear safety regulators and try to establish a safer and more coherent system. But I doubt that we could go further than that.

Last but not least, I really believe that these issues and debates very much help to shape energy policy, but there is no single instrument that provides for it. There are many instruments, and we will come back to this debate in the future.

Thank you very much for this debate. I will be very happy also to answer questions in the ITRE Committee, or in any other committees that would like to discuss energy issues in more detail.

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

I have received six motions for a resolution which have been submitted in accordance with Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure<sup>(2)</sup>.

The vote will take place today at 12.00.

**Written statements (Rule 149)**

**Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE), in writing.** – (RO) I welcome the progress that has been made through the signing of the agreement in Ankara launching the Nabucco project and the protocol to the agreement for launching the Desertec project. The Nabucco project must be made a priority as it provides a solution to the gas supply problem, which has intensified in recent years. I know that, although Nabucco is a project which is just as important from a geopolitical perspective, the project's partners must also have, at the same time, strong commercial motives so that it becomes a reality as quickly as possible. The economic crisis, which has reduced the money that the participating companies have available for investment, along with a number of uncertainties linked to the sources supplying the pipeline are obstacles which must be overcome. The EUR 200 million we are offering the project are welcome, but we also need to step up political and diplomatic measures with Turkey and the countries in the region supplying the gas. I would therefore like to call for a show of solidarity by Member States in order to be able to avert gas crises similar to those that we have had in recent years. We cannot wait for the Treaty of Lisbon to come into force and the Nabucco project to be completed while Europeans are running the risk of remaining without gas in the middle of winter as a result of disputes between Russia and Ukraine.

**Ivailo Kalfin (S&D), in writing.** – (BG) Unfortunately the EU still does not have an effective energy security policy. In recent years the first steps have been taken in this direction, for which I would in particular like to congratulate Commissioner Piebalgs. Bulgaria has also contributed in this respect. However, these processes are still too slow, particularly in the light of the particularly dynamic activity on the part of Russia and other competitors.

We need a much clearer and more active policy which must include some of the following strands:

- encouraging the completion of all projects involving the supply of gas to Europe, which can realistically secure market-based funding, including the Nord Stream and South Stream;
- encouraging the construction of new facilities which will contribute to energy independence and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, in particular plants powered by nuclear and renewable sources of energy;
- developing common rules for the supply and transit of gas;
- an active policy towards the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus to secure supplies of Caspian gas for Europe.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE), in writing.** – This debate has become an additional proof of how badly the EU needs a united energy policy. There are Members who urge the Commission and Member States to take concrete coordinated measures in the spirit of solidarity and who propose to act like the EU already had such a policy. Their efforts have not only political and moral but also practical value because as representatives of the citizens they can speed up the creation of the common energy policy. There are others who use the absence of such a policy as an excuse to justify their bilateral deals with suppliers which often ignore the requirements of transparency and fair competition, not to mention European solidarity. This is a short-sighted and risky approach which plays into the hands of those undemocratic suppliers whose political strategy is to split and weaken the EU. The Commission should provide not only political and legal but also financial assistance to companies which are engaged in efforts to diversify our energy supplies. To really advance towards genuine energy solidarity, the Member States should start to inform each other and the Commission on their agreements with third partners.

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<sup>(2)</sup> See Minutes.

**Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) As we are at the start of a new mandate, I feel that one of the areas where the European Parliament must be more actively involved is safeguarding energy security. Bearing this in mind, I want to highlight the importance of the Nabucco project, which will help safeguard the European Union's energy security as this will guarantee European consumers access to alternative sources via a secure route. The signing of the agreement on 13 July 2009 between Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Hungary on the Nabucco project, marking the political commitment of the partner states participating in this project to continue their efforts to construct the gas pipeline, has sent a positive signal to investors and the countries supplying natural gas. The countries involved in this project must, along with the European Commission, continue to focus their efforts on attracting investment and guaranteeing reliable suppliers for Nabucco.

**Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (RO) In addition to achieving number one position in the list of gas exporters, Russia has recently become the largest exporter of oil in the world, overtaking Saudi Arabia. This situation puts Moscow in a special position of influence, based on having control of these resources. However, energy is a commodity which must be subject to the principles of the market economy. It must not be possible for energy to be used as an instrument of political pressure. The energy crises which Europe has faced have highlighted the importance of diversification of energy supply sources. They have also demonstrated the added value Nabucco offers in this respect for the entire European Union. Romania has been and remains a strong supporter of the Nabucco project. In fact, Romania signed the Intergovernmental Agreement for the Nabucco project in July, along with Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary and Austria. We regard the conclusion of this agreement as a success and an important step forward. A gas pipeline of the size and ambition of Nabucco will need to face many challenges before it becomes a reality. The only solution for overcoming these challenges is to persevere with the appropriate measures.

**Traian Ungureanu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – We try hard to encourage a coherent energy policy, but such a policy exists and is fully implemented. There is only one small problem: it is NOT ours. It is Russia's. Now, we have the French EDF company signing into South Stream. Before that, we had the Russians taking over the Hungarian company MOL's interest in Nabucco. And before that we had the Austrian gas terminal in Baumgarten being taken over by the mysterious Centrex company. We need a clear, European energy policy, and we need it now. This is possibly our last opportunity to rally behind Nabucco. Otherwise, if the Council and the Commission remain neutral, they should be prepared for very cold winters and very hot politics.

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**Mario Mauro (PPE)**. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would ask you to call for silence in the House because we have received news from Kabul of a very serious attack against the international peacekeeping force, and the sketchy information that we have so far talks of six deaths in the Italian contingent, among the Folgore paratroopers.

I would therefore ask you to call for a minute's silence in the House precisely so that we may remember those who are fighting to establish our ideals of peace and freedom throughout the world.

**President**. – Ladies and gentlemen, as you have just heard from Mr Mauro, a tragic incident has taken place in Afghanistan: six peacekeepers have lost their lives. I would kindly ask that we rise and observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect in light of this tragic incident.

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

**IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS**

*Vice-President*

#### **4. Voting time**

**President**. - The next item is voting time.

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

#### **4.1. 2009 and 2010 intervention periods for butter and skimmed milk powder (A7-0005/2009, Paolo De Castro) (vote)**

#### **4.2. Common agricultural policy (CAP): support schemes for farmers (A7-0004/2009, Paolo De Castro) (vote)**

#### **4.3. SWIFT (vote)**

– Before the vote on Amendment 2

**Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, the ALDE group does object to this change.

*(Requests by the Verts/ALE Group for the text of Amendments 1 and 2 to be moved)*

– Before the vote on Amendment 1

**Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, again the ALDE group does have an objection.

*(Requests by the Verts/ALE Group for the text of Amendments 1 and 2 to be moved)*

#### **4.4. EC/Tajikistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (vote)**

#### **4.5. Conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EC and the Republic of Tajikistan (A7-0007/2009, Alojz Peterle) (vote)**

#### **4.6. Situation in Lithuania following the adoption of the law on protection of minors (vote)**

#### **4.7. Crisis in the dairy farming sector (vote)**

#### **4.8. Energy security (Nabucco and Desertec) (vote)**

**President.** - That concludes voting time.

### **5. Explanations of vote**

#### **Oral explanations of vote**

#### **Motions for resolution RC-B7-0026/2009**

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** - Mr President, I voted against the resolution concerning Lithuania because I found this resolution to be a premature and unbalanced reaction to a law that has not yet even entered into force, let alone in its original wording.

It is true that human rights fall within the competence of the Union. However, in this case the Union comes very close to infringing the principle of sovereignty of a Member State, and that is why I have opposed this resolution, also bearing in mind that it would have a negative result on the Irish referendum as a bad example of how the sovereignty of the Member States could be treated.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) Mr President, I voted against this resolution because Lithuania will be able to deal with the problem on its own. The Lithuanian President has created a special group to review this legislation, which is only supposed to come into force in 2010. Moreover, I think that the resolution would constitute an excessive amount of interference in the affairs of a sovereign nation such as Lithuania. Furthermore, this resolution contains a statement to the effect that the legal opinion of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights should be requested. It does not fall within the remit of the Agency for Fundamental Rights to evaluate individual countries and draw up an opinion on such cases. It would set far too dangerous a precedent.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, I am an enthusiastic pro-European and advocate of a European constitution as well as the Treaty of Lisbon. I am also a fighter for human rights. However, this resolution inflicts a lot of damage on Europe, particularly in the run-up to the Irish referendum, and it misuses the issue of human rights for ideological purposes. The Lithuanian law has nothing to do with human rights, but if anything it actually protects the human rights of Lithuanian children rather than violating them. I therefore consider this resolution to be an ideological disgrace. The Left and the Liberals in this House have caused serious damage to Europe and to human rights with this resolution.

**Philip Claeys (NI).** – (NL) Mr President, our Lithuanian friends would certainly have envisaged something else for themselves. After liberating themselves from the yoke of the Soviet Union, they wanted to be members, as quickly as possible, of that other union, which likes to put itself forward as a unique association of free nations. Now, though, it seems to be once again the case that one form of guardianship has simply been replaced by another, albeit a more subtle one. Today, too, Lithuania is no longer free: when the Lithuanian Parliament adopts a law aimed at protecting minors, it is castigated for its trouble and shunned. There is not a single area that is still free of European meddling and this is something that is definitely not going to improve over the coming years. On the contrary, in fact, the new European Commissioner for Human Rights – what's in a name? – will reinforce this European guardianship still further. Thank you, Mr Verhofstadt, thank you, the other mandarins of the Commission, for the likes of this suffocation of freedom.

**Daniel Hannan (ECR).** – Mr President, see how the thicket of EU regulation grows. See how Brussels shoots its tendrils into every crevasse, every nook of national life.

Issues like this, the protection of minors, are for many of our constituents sensitive and ethical issues. If we in this Parliament presume to legislate for the nation states, what is the point of them? Is there no limit to our presumption?

Let me make my position absolutely clear on this. When the United Kingdom had the closest equivalent to this legislation, which was called Section 28, I was virtually the only Conservative to oppose it. I was years before the rest of my party in pushing for full equality for gay people, including on the equalisation of the age of consent, and on civil partnerships. I am delighted that the rest of my party has now reached that point of view.

But I am not a Lithuanian legislator! The people who should determine this issue in Lithuania are those who are answerable through the democratic mechanisms and procedures of that country. If we are not prepared to allow them to do that, we might as well mothball our national parliaments, turn them into museums and lock the door.

#### **Motions for resolution RC-B7-0047/2009**

**Peter Jahr (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, the survival of many farms is in serious jeopardy. I am therefore pleased that we have today adopted a cross-party motion for a resolution on the crisis in the dairy farming sector. I deeply regret that the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance did not participate in drawing up this motion.

It should be made clear that we cannot overcome this crisis with the measures proposed by the Commission alone. First and foremost, we must increase the consumption of milk products in order to reduce the strain on the market. In this regard, the promotion of sales is more important than stockpiling. Constructive proposals such as the use of milk powder to feed calves, establishing minimum prices for cheese products, clear labelling of cheese analogues and the use of butter fat to assist in the manufacture of ice cream and bakery products have been around for a long time. Why they have not, as yet, been implemented by the Commission is beyond me.

I would urge the Commissioner to take note of the proposals in the motion for a resolution and implement them as a matter of urgency.

**Oldřich Vlasák (ECR).** – (CS) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to explain why I abstained from voting on the crisis in the milk and dairy products sector. It is a sad fact that the situation in the dairy sector is extremely critical. Despite the fact that consumer prices have risen by 14% over recent years, the purchase price of milk has fallen by almost 40%. Many European dairy producers are therefore now facing ruin. In the Czech Republic, for example, 15 Czech dairies are clinically dead in financial terms, according to the managing director of Madeta, Mr Teplý. The situation must be resolved on a systematic basis, however, through long-term management of the sector, not just through short-term support measures such as subsidies,

intervention purchases and support for private storage. This only distorts the market while not preventing price instability. At the same time, we must establish a level playing field for farmers from all Member States, and not just in the dairy sector.

**Franz Obermayr (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, this proposal from the Commission is essentially to be welcomed and it is a sensible one, at least from an economic and politically realistic point of view. However, it should be added that, if we look at this situation from all angles, the drop in prices is not merely the result of a fall in demand.

We also need to take into account the problems of the dairy farmers in Austria and the Alpine region. The small domestic farms cannot realistically compete with the huge dairy farms in northern Germany and the Netherlands. This gives rise to an imbalance. The release of the entire quantity of milk would force dairy farms in Austria to close down and it would have serious and unpredictable consequences, including for the cultivated landscape.

A few multinational companies would then dominate the European market. I can well imagine what consequences this would have for food quality as well.

**Mario Borghesio (EFD).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in the last few days the legitimate protest of milk producers about prices, about the lack of European Union intervention and about the authorisation – not in the future, but immediately – of labelling, especially that of artificial dairy products, has been taking place throughout Europe.

We want fresh products on the tables of our consumers, products of which we can know the origin, and not the rubbish that we get from other countries: powdered milk passed off as fresh milk from our own producers. Tomorrow, milk will be poured away in Padania, as in the rest of Europe – and this is an important protest, because it maintains the quality of our products. We in Europe want to eat wholesome food, from our region: good, fresh milk, milk that I obviously drink. We in Padania drink in memory of the sacrifice made by our producers, which this Europe must protect.

The European Commissioner has excluded cheese with a long maturation period from the provisions; powdered-milk producers are the only ones it safeguards. This is a disgrace!

**Krisztina Morvai (NI).** – (HU) We are living, Mr President, at a time when dairy farmers are committing suicide every day, even in rich Western countries like France. This is therefore a huge tragedy. I voted in favour of both of Mr De Castro's reports because immediate, urgent intervention is required. However, we know that milk powder and butter have been stockpiled in the intervention stocks. They will be taken out of the intervention stocks and will only end up pushing down prices again. This is one problem I have.

The other problem is that this measure is much more likely to help large farmers than small ones. We should not forget, however, that smallholders are in need of immediate help to make a basic living, whereas for larger farmers it would simply preserve or increase their profits. Fundamental changes are needed. We finally must guarantee food sovereignty instead of using the free trade model dictated by the WTO. As other speakers before me have said, we need food produced locally by local farmers.

**Daniel Hannan (ECR).** – Mr President, like all those who have spoken I am aware of the extent of the crisis in our agrarian sector. Any Member who represents farmers knows that. But the crisis is a product of our existing agricultural system – the common agricultural policy – which has had calamitous consequences for farmers in my part of the United Kingdom. And not only for farmers: for our consumers, for our taxpayers, and indeed for the poor of the Third World who find that their markets are denied and that they then have surpluses dumped on them.

We were gradually moving, in the European Union, away from the system of direct support that had such deleterious environmental and economic consequences, and now we are rushing back in. I can tell you that in the United Kingdom people have clear memories of how the milk quota system worked. We were allocated a quota that was less than our national production, so we have the extraordinary sight of British farmers using milk as fertiliser or pouring it away down the drain and then having to re-import milk from the Netherlands, France or other parts of the European Union to get up to the level of demand. We were just beginning to get away, and now this House has voted to bring it all back.

Anyone who thinks that the European Union is going in the direction of doing less and devolving power need only look at today's vote.

**Syed Kamall (ECR).** - Mr President, last week saw the re-release of several albums by the band The Beatles in digitally remastered form. This week we are debating the milk quota system in a remastered form. They might not have much in common at first glance until you consider the title of one of the Beatles' songs, *Back in the USSR*. That, I think, sums it all up. Here we have a system where prices and quotas are decided by bureaucrats, not by the needs of consumers or even the needs of suppliers. Here we have a system where consumers pay twice over for higher prices and higher taxes to support a system that did not complain when prices were high.

I remember towards the end of the last mandate, Martin Schulz saying that at last he had seen a social democratisation of the EPP. Well, actually I think his dream has gone further and we are seeing the Sovietisation of the EU. Are we really looking at an 'EUSSR'?

**Jens Rohde (ALDE).** - (DA) Mr President, we Danish Liberals have a great deal of sympathy for those farmers facing the great economic challenges of our day and, in fact, we also have a great deal of sympathy for the idea of giving short-term assistance to those in need. The only problem is that short-term, institutionalised support schemes never remain short-term, despite the many fine declarations of intent. They always become permanent in the end, and this is something that all those of us who have been involved in implementing them, be it here or in our national parliaments, do know. That is why we fear – and we think it is right that we should do so – that the measures that this resolution recommends, and the Commission's initiatives, too, seen in this light, will lead, *de facto*, to a more permanent route away from the excellent reform process towards efficient agriculture that the Commissioner has been responsible for, and we therefore feel we must reject this resolution.

#### **Motions for resolution RC-B7-0040/2009**

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S-D).** - Mr President, I voted in favour because the issue of energy supply security is of paramount importance today for all Member States of the European Union.

The recent Russian-Ukrainian crisis has clearly demonstrated existing problems in the energy sector, and especially the total dependence of some Member States on single suppliers of natural gas.

The Baltic countries, which are isolated from the rest of Europe, are left to the mercy of gas suppliers from eastern Europe. Now it is more important than ever to develop a comprehensive common energy policy based on solidarity, the diversification of energy sources and defence of common interests.

I would like take this opportunity to thank the Commission and especially the Swedish Presidency for presenting the Baltic Sea Strategy, which will allow effective mobilisation of structural funds to be used more efficiently to achieve common goals.

I am convinced that, if properly implemented, the strategy will become an example of regional success.

Finally I would like to urge the Commission to take a leading role in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy in order to ensure that in certain cases the interests of individual Member States do not take precedence over the achievement of common strategy goals.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) I voted in favour of this resolution, as the question of energy is an important test of European solidarity. The Member States have to work together on this matter.

Energy policy must be linked to foreign policy. The Commission also has to look at diversifying energy security in the various EU Member States. The battle against climate change means that energy which depends on coal may face dire financial straits. Price hikes will then affect the citizens. It is high time that we introduced a common, EU-wide policy in this field. The Commission must clearly state that it will combat the selfish attitudes of Member States which see no danger in a continued dependence on one supplier, such as a reliance on Russia for gas, for example.

We need action. The European Commission and the Commissioner for Energy need to express their political will clearly.

**Iosif Matula (PPE).** – (RO) Mr President, I voted in favour of this resolution and I will now explain why I did. The European Union is dependent on energy imports. Energy consumption is continuing to grow, but the natural resources are limited. Energy security assumes at the same time diversification of sources and transport routes, as well as highly efficient interconnection between Member States, which is currently being worked on through various projects, with European financing for the gas pipelines between Romania and

its neighbours, Hungary and Bulgaria. This is where we are at the moment, I told myself, but what do we still have to do?

I would like to draw a perhaps bold, but simple comparison with electrical energy. At the moment, our houses are supplied with electrical current without us knowing where it comes from. A diversified network supplying natural gas and numerous transport networks must enable us to achieve the exact same aim: guaranteeing a gas supply in any situation, regardless of the situation. This is why I supported and still do support the Nabucco project, but also the move towards diversification of renewable energy sources, at the same time.

### Written explanations of vote

#### - Report: Paolo De Castro (A7-0005/2009)

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on a proposal for a Council regulation as regards the 2009 and 2010 intervention periods for butter and skimmed milk powder, because I see these measures as the continuation of a positive measure that has had immediate effects in regulating the excess supply affecting the milk and dairy market. The drop in prices on the world milk and dairy market over the last 12 months resulted from a general increase in production and a fall in worldwide demand due to the economic and financial crisis. That justifies continuing public intervention for butter and powdered milk.

**Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) On the basis of the report by my Italian fellow Member Paolo De Castro, I voted for the proposal for a Council regulation derogating from the regulation on common market organisation (CMO) as regards the 2009 and 2010 intervention periods for butter and skimmed milk powder. Following 2007's worldwide explosion in the prices of all foodstuffs, and therefore of milk, the last 12 months have seen a collapse in prices. I back the Commission, which in early 2009 introduced aid for private storage of butter in an effort to support the market. Given the exceptional nature of the situation, I support the extension until 28 February 2010 of the current public intervention period for butter and skimmed milk powder, through a tender procedure. In addition, in view of the uncertainty regarding the time needed for the dairy products market to recover, I have backed the authorisation given to the Commission to extend the 2010/2011 intervention period, again through a tender procedure, should market conditions make it necessary.

**David Casa (PPE)**, *in writing*. – This report refers to the proposal for a Council regulation which derogates from the Single CMO Regulation with regard to the intervention periods for butter and skimmed-milk powder. Due to the fact that there is a serious crisis in the dairy sector I have voted in favour of this report.

**Lena Ek, Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (SV) We are fully aware that the situation of dairy farmers is unsustainable. However, we are equally aware and convinced that interventions by the EU are not the solution. The time has now come for a transition to a market-based, insurance-based system that liberates farmers without upsetting the domestic or global market. It is also high time that there was a review of the situation with regard to competition in the large-scale input industry and in the almost as large food industry, which stands between the farmer and consumers.

**Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) With regard to the amendments which propose a freeze on milk quotas, I would like to state the following. Firstly, there is no basis for assuming that a proposed increase in production quotas (which would follow a review of the CAP) would have an impact on the crisis in the sector.

Secondly, freezing an increase in the quotas (which is what the amendments to the European Parliament resolution propose) would punish farmers in countries which are currently on the verge of using their quotas. It would be unfair and even immoral to change the rules at this stage in the game. Thirdly, I would like to remind you that, at the 2002 summit in Copenhagen, we negotiated (these negotiations included Poland) on the subject of milk quotas, in the knowledge that these quotas would apply until 2007. In Luxembourg, the quota system was extended until 2014, without our participation or right to vote.

We cannot resolve the problems in the dairy sector by giving some producers the opportunity to improve their lot at the cost of other producers. Our concepts and actions should aim to give everyone an opportunity, regardless of what country they come from, whether it be the 15 old Member States or the 12 new Members.

**Jörg Leichtfried (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (DE) I agree with the Commission's short-term solution of purchasing butter and milk powder. However, I call for a long-term solution to the dairy crisis, for example by using



flexible quantity control to give a milk price that covers costs. The milk surplus must be stemmed at national level by imposing European requirements.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The crisis in the dairy sector has also led to a slump in the price of butter and skimmed milk powder. I welcome the Commission's proposal to continue to subsidise the market and to extend the intervention period up to 28 February 2010. It is to be hoped that, following this, the market will recover and that prices will once again be determined by supply and demand. For a limited time, however, I believe that this intervention is necessary and have therefore voted in favour of the rapporteur's proposal.

**Cristiana Muscardini (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (IT) The serious crisis in the dairy farming sector is putting the very survival of dairy farming at risk. Therefore, I think it is right to remain opposed to individual quota management, since this would in fact mean superseding the end-of-year compensation payments, a mechanism that is, on the contrary, crucial to the Italian production system. Rather, I am in favour of a temporary increase in the intervention price, of initiatives and measures designed to achieve a balance within the sector, of enhancing the information offered to consumers, and of the important step of introducing labels of origin for milk and dairy products.

In particular, for the purpose of restoring the balance of supply and demand, we should support the proposal temporarily to freeze part of the quotas assigned to individual States and to provide for a compensation mechanism for producers forced to destroy part of their herds that is proportionate to the percentage of the milk quota frozen.

**Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) The European Union is currently going through one of the deepest crises ever recorded in the dairy sector, which is due to the increase in production and significant drop in global demand. Given the dire situation which Europe's dairy producers find themselves in, we must continue the period of public intervention (i.e. for buying and storing skimmed milk powder and butter) at least until February next year or until 2011, if it is considered necessary. I do not think that we can allow ourselves to stand by and watch farms in Europe being closed down because in a year's time we would need to import milk and dairy products from outside the Community. If we also consider that the health standards will not be anywhere near those we are looking for, we have far too much to lose. This report is welcome in this context. However, to be able to really solve the problem of the dairy sector, we must adopt related measures because this stock of products involves allocating considerable resources and it could happen at any given moment that this stock will be of no use. We must invest now in a sustainable agricultural system, capable of meeting our food requirements, even if we are in the midst of a financial crisis, in order to prevent a food crisis occurring later.

#### **- Report: Paolo De Castro (A7-0004/2009)**

**David Casa (PPE)**, *in writing*. – This is a proposal that amends the direct support schemes for farmers that are currently in place. Due to the fact that I am in agreement on the need for such amendments I have voted in favour.

**Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (RO) We are at the start of a new mandate when we set out the priorities for the European Union's future policies. I know that we are tempted to focus our attention on certain issues which we consider to be extremely important and ignore others. On this point, I would like to emphasise that we can give up many things, but we cannot give up eating. This is why agriculture must remain a priority area for the EU. In my view, we must increase the minimum amount of aid granted to farmers above the limit of EUR 15 000 set by the Commission, as well as allocate an increased budget to promote the dairy and dairy product sector. I strongly recommend support for farmers producing milk and meat, with a view to stabilising markets, by including them in the Temporary Crisis Framework for state aid.

Furthermore, the direct aid systems need to also take into account the particular features of the new Member States where agriculture plays an important role in the national economy and ensure that support is maintained for agriculture to enable them to overcome the structural problems and achieve the objective of convergence through boosting the development level in the agricultural sector and eliminating the differences in terms of efficiency and competitiveness in relation to the old Member States.

#### **- Motion for a resolution: SWIFT B7-0038/2009**

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S-D)**, *in writing*. – The fight against terrorism has been high on the agenda of this House. However, we must strike the right balance between the security measures and the protection of civil

liberties and fundamental rights. We also need to ensure the utmost respect for privacy and data protection. Balance and proportionality must be the key principles on which the fight against terrorism is based. The European Union has always demonstrated a firm commitment to the protection citizens' privacy, and that must be maintained. The Community is based on the rule of law and all transfers of European personal data to third countries should respect procedural guarantees and defence rights.

It goes without saying that any transfers must comply with data protection legislation at national and European level. SWIFT is a key infrastructure, and we must ensure that any requests for data transfers are duly justified, based on targeted cases and strictly subject to judicial authorisation. The Community must take a firm stance in the negotiations with the US to ensure that SWIFT data cannot be used for any other purposes than those linked to terrorism financing.

**Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson, Marita Ulvskog and Åsa Westlund (S&D), in writing.** – (SV) We Social Democrats have chosen to abstain from the vote on Amendment 1. It is vital for democratic control that the European Parliament and the national parliaments have access to the documents and negotiation directives prior to the negotiations with the United States' authorities concerning access to financial payment messaging data. European citizens must be able to be confident that the transfer of their bank details does not violate national or EU law. At the same time, we realise the importance of being able to investigate crimes of terrorism effectively in the future, but not at any cost to democracy.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing.** – (FR) I voted for the joint resolution on the envisaged international agreement to make available to the United States Treasury Department financial payment messaging data to prevent and combat terrorism and terrorist financing. However, as representatives of the citizens, and being aware of the sensitive nature of this subject, which affects fundamental rights, we require strong guarantees prior to the signing of any agreement with the United States on SWIFT. These guarantees are: that data be transferred only in order to combat terrorism; that a reciprocal mechanism oblige the United States to transfer relevant financial information at the request of the European authorities; that the validity of this interim agreement be restricted to 12 months at most; and that a new agreement be negotiated later on, once the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force, with the full participation of the European Parliament and of the national parliaments.

I would also like the veil of secrecy that has to a large extent shrouded the heart of this issue to be lifted and we MEPs to be given far more information about the procedures laid down in this agreement than we have so far received.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing.** – (DE) According to the planned international agreement, financial payment messaging data is to be made available to the United States Treasury Department to prevent and combat terrorism and terrorist financing. The transmission of financial payment messaging data to foreign powers constitutes a serious encroachment on the fundamental rights of our citizens, particularly when the recipient of the data is the United States of America.

The US has shown many times in the past that it does not take data protection seriously, particularly if it has to do with achieving and implementing the projects and goals of the government. Although this motion for a resolution has good intentions to protect European citizens, the inappropriate use of these important data cannot ultimately be ruled out. For this reason, I have voted against the motion for a resolution.

#### **- Motion for a resolution: CE/Tajikistan B7-0025/2009**

**David Casa (PPE), in writing.** – Tajikistan occupies an important geographical position since it is situated at a key intersection between Europe and Asia and therefore plays an important role in enhancing the stability of the region. I have voted in favour of this resolution which seeks to identify a number of important issues that should be addressed in Tajikistan.

#### **- Report: Alojz Peterle (A7-0007/2009)**

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S-D), in writing.** – I very much welcome the proposed EC-Tajikistan Partnership and Cooperation agreement which provides a framework for future EU cooperation with Tajikistan. The Central Asia region is very important in economic and political terms for the Community and this agreement will help to consolidate and strengthen the EU's political and economic and trade relations and presence in Tajikistan and Central Asia in general.

Moreover, it will also promote economic growth and support sustainable development, actions against poverty, and stability in Tajikistan and the Central Asia region. I am delighted to see that this agreement also incorporates such issues as actions against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, trafficking, the drug trade and organised crime. From now on, both the EU and Tajikistan will pursue a close political dialogue which will open the way for deeper relations in a great number of fields.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (ES) In 2007, under the German Presidency, the EU adopted a strategy for Central Asia aimed at a new association. The Agreement with Tajikistan is part of this strategy and it has been indicated that its main ambition in the region is natural resources, particularly gas. I voted against the report on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Tajikistan because the EU is only interested in that country for its natural resources and its geostrategic position, given that Tajikistan has borders with Afghanistan and China.

The EU's relations with third countries should be based on other interests, on mutual interests, always with respect for the sovereignty of both parties and of course with respect for the management of their resources.

**- Joint motion for a resolution: Situation in Lithuania following the adoption of the law on the protection of minors (RC-B7-0026/2009)**

**Robert Atkins (ECR), in writing.** – I and my British Conservative colleagues can agree with much of this report. We remain wholeheartedly supportive of providing equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of their disability, race, religion, or sexuality, and abhor discrimination in all its forms. However, we do have serious misgivings with regard to the involvement of the Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Union on issues which we believe to be the preserve of individual nation states.

That is why we have decided to abstain on this resolution.

**Martin Callanan (ECR), in writing.** – Members of the European Conservatives and Reformists strongly support equal treatment for all regardless of race, religion, sexuality, or disability, and strongly condemn discrimination in all its forms.

However, we do have serious misgivings with regard to the involvement of the Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Union on issues which we believe to be the preserve of individual nation states. As a democratic nation, we believe this matter should be decided by the Lithuanian parliament and the Lithuanian people.

Therefore, we have decided not to support this resolution.

**Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution on the Lithuanian Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information, since I believe that the law passed by the Lithuanian Parliament on 14 July 2009, under which it is prohibited 'to directly disseminate to minors [...] public information whereby homosexual, bisexual or polygamous relations are promoted', because it has 'a detrimental effect on the development of minors', should be urgently reviewed. According to the European Union's principles, all forms of discrimination, and in particular discrimination based on sexual orientation, should be eliminated, and therefore the Agency for Fundamental Rights should give an opinion on the law in question and the amendments to it in the light of the EU Treaties and EU law.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – (FR) The motion for a resolution that is being put before us today is truly mind-boggling. The finger is being pointed at a country because its democratically elected parliament is in the process of examining a law that – in common with the laws that exist in the majority of the Member States – is designed to protect minors, and that is aimed specifically at protecting them from any propaganda promoting homosexuality, bisexuality or polygamy. What could be more natural, where children are concerned? Well, no, it seems that this is 'discrimination', and the entire EU is mobilising against poor Lithuania, which is 'guilty' of banning proselytising and of encouraging family values.

What is even more astonishing is the fact that the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), which theoretically claims to be Christian democrat and to have certain moral values, has also put its signature to this absurdity, which the left initiated. As usual, children's rights count for nothing in the face of pressure from certain lobby groups. It should be said that, in their time, some Members of this Parliament were advocates of paedophilia in the name of universal freedom and of the right of all, no matter how young, to sexuality. This resolution is not just criminal, it is disgusting!

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for the resolution condemning the Lithuanian law for the protection of minors against the detrimental effect of public information, which sets out to ban any information on homosexuality if it is accessible to minors. This law totally contravenes European laws, specifically with regard to combating discrimination based on sexual orientation, with a largely homophobic content, and also poses an obstacle to freedom of expression. It has been widely condemned by NGOs, including the ILGA (International Lesbian and Gay Association) and Amnesty International, and by the Council of Europe. We must offer young people a vision of society that is open to diversity and founded on the principle of respect for others, however different they may be. For its part, the European Commission, as guardian of the Treaties, must act in a responsible manner and launch infringement proceedings against Lithuania, should it persist with its decision. Through this vote, we are calling on the Lithuanian parliamentary representatives to pull themselves together and reject this text, which signals a return to a past that, personally speaking, I condemn.

**Jim Higgins, Seán Kelly, Mairead McGuinness and Gay Mitchell (PPE)**, *in writing*. – This is an explanation of vote on behalf of the Fine Gael Delegation to the European Parliament. The Fine Gael MEPs abstained on the votes on Lithuania as the legislative/legal processes have not yet been completed there. When the Lithuanian legal process has been finalised the question as to whether it conflicts with EU Treaties can be examined. This is the normal and correct procedure. We also note that the resolution sets one form of discrimination above others and is in itself a form of discrimination.

**Filip Kaczmarek (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PL) I voted against the resolution, which could set a dangerous precedent for the European Union. In my opinion, its contents and subject matter are incompatible with the principle of subsidiarity. These kinds of resolutions may foster euroscepticism, as they are proof of the EU's tendency to become involved in the internal affairs of EU Member States. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of EU Member States is not an absolute principle, but there is nothing happening in Lithuania that would force us to take action. Those who want to see a better Europe should vote against this resolution. That is the reason for my decision. Thank you very much.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (ES) The Lithuanian Parliament has approved amendments to the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information. This law aims to prevent the dissemination of public information 'that agitates for homosexual ... relations' or that 'defies family values'.

For this reason, the Lithuanian authorities should amend the law, or repeal it, and should refrain from adopting the amendments to the penal and administrative codes, so as to ensure that laws are compatible with human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in international and European law.

It was a step in the right direction when the new President of Lithuania asked the Lithuanian Parliament to reconsider the law to ensure that it complies with the constitutional principles of the rule of law, legal certainty, and legal clarity and that it does not contravene the guarantees of an open society and pluralistic democracy.

For these reasons, and due to the urgent need to revise this law, I voted for the joint motion for a resolution of the European Parliament.

**Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) I voted against this resolution, which sets a dangerous precedent in that the points of view expressed do not abide by the principle of subsidiarity and are a form of intervention in the sovereign actions of the parliament of a Member State, at a time when the law in question has not even entered into force.

#### **- Joint motion for a resolution: Crisis in the dairy farming sector (RC-B7-0047/2009)**

**Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I endorsed and voted in favour of Amendment 28 to this resolution asking the Commission and the Member States to immediately adopt additional measures to intervene in the current level of Community production by means of a temporary freeze on quota increases, which were decided during the last common agricultural policy reforms, because this amendment addressed the interests of all Portuguese milk producers and especially won the support of milk producers in the Azores. I therefore regret that this amendment did not gain the support of the majority of Members of the European Parliament.

**Zigmantas Balčytis (S-D)**, *in writing*. – I voted for this joint resolution because, contrary to the European Commission's prognosis on the substantial increase in the prices of dairy products, the dairy market is witnessing a dramatic deterioration, with falling milk prices despite intervention and export subsidies. The

economies of many Member States are heavily dependent on agriculture and farming. Unfortunately, there is now a big difference between the prices paid by consumers for agricultural products in the supermarkets and the money received by producers. Many EU dairy farmers are now at serious risk and are forced to sell dairy products below their production costs. The Commission must take adequate measures in both the short and long term to overcome this crisis and to save the EU dairy market. In this regard, I very much support the request to create an EU Dairy Fund to aid producers and to support farm investments. If we want to have a well-functioning dairy market we must support farm investments in modernisations, small producers and young farmers. And most importantly, to ensure that farmers receive a fair and adequate price for their production.

**David Casa (PPE)**, *in writing*. – The past 12 months have seen the deterioration of the dairy market with prices of milk falling below 21 cents per litre and leaving many farmers with no alternative but to sell dairy products at a loss. This is an extremely serious situation and therefore I have voted in favour of this resolution.

**Ole Christensen, Dan Jørgensen, Christel Schaldemose and Britta Thomsen (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (DA) We have voted against the proposals for increased agricultural aid to the dairy farming sector. Our group votes consistently in favour of reducing agricultural aid and continuing to reform the EU's agricultural policy. In connection with the decision in this regard, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament voted against Amendments 16, 17 and 19, because, despite having a favourable content, these amendments were not relevant to the discussion in question.

**Edite Estrela (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the motion for a joint resolution on the crisis in the dairy farming sector since I believe urgent measures are needed to resolve the serious crisis that the sector is experiencing, particularly by stimulating demand so as to restore market balance. It is regrettable, however, that the compromise reached in Parliament does not include the temporary suspension of quota increases or other measures to reduce production, which would be very important in helping European farmers to face this crisis.

**Diogo Feio (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The serious crisis affecting the dairy farming sector makes it urgent to adopt more effective measures for supporting producers and to consider the usefulness of eliminating milk quotas in 2015.

Stabilisation of the milk and dairy market will not be achieved just through one or two odd measures, such as not increasing quotas, designed to mitigate the immediate, temporary effects of the crisis. On the contrary, medium- to long-term solutions will have to be considered, and the reasons why this market is not working properly must be assessed, together with the best ways to maintain sustainable production, not forgetting the consumers' right to a fair price.

In this respect, I must point out the particularly fragile competitive status of those outermost regions that depend heavily on dairy production, such as the Azores. I regret a certain insensitivity on the part of the European Commission and, at a national level, the poor management of this process by the Portuguese Government. Our leaders' ability to take action and support national interests is particularly important in times of crisis. Regrettably, that has not been the case. On the positive side, I note the success of the amendments of which I am a co-author, which support an increase in *de minimis* payments. It is not an ideal solution, but it helps.

**José Manuel Fernandes (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (PT) I am voting in favour of this resolution, although it does not go far enough. To stabilise prices now, the bonus of 2% of the annual increase beyond the quota must be withdrawn urgently. The milk quota system will still need to continue after 2015 or be replaced with another regulatory mechanism. It is vital to adjust milk production to European domestic demand so as to guarantee producers a fair price. Market transparency is essential, and in that respect I suggest setting up a European observatory to help monitor and regulate the market from production to distribution.

**João Ferreira (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (PT) The adopted resolution contains positive measures that are necessary in the current context of the severe crisis affecting the sector. That is why we voted in favour. These are just one-off measures, however, which do not solve the basic problems of the sector, particularly those of small and medium-sized producers, for whom the situation is likely to get worse in future, given the intention that has been announced to abolish milk quotas.

The battle that milk producers have been fighting, which goes beyond their immediate aims – to sell their produce at prices that ensure their survival – also has a broader meaning and importance that have to do with the kind of agriculture that we want in the future. The neoliberal model of agriculture, which promotes

flooding the market with products from countries with greater productive capacity and promotes intensive production in some countries and the abandonment of farming and food dependency in others, must be replaced with a model based on the concept of food sovereignty and food security – the right of each country to produce in a sustainable way. In this model, public mechanisms for controlling production – quotas, adapted to each country's needs – are essential.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) When a policy drives farmers to suicide, when it leads men to deliberately destroy the fruits of their labours because that is no worse than what the policy is offering them, it is time to change the policy. The liberalisation of agriculture, in general, and of the dairy sector, in particular, has been a disaster. How many times must it be said in this House that, because it nourishes people, because it helps to make the countryside more attractive and to keep populations in rural areas, agriculture cannot be considered as an economic activity like any other? Foodstuffs are not products on which one can speculate on markets disconnected from any form of reality. It is absurd to encourage the importing of products that do not even satisfy the quality criteria that our farmers have to meet. It is scandalous to leave these farmers at the mercy of processors and predators from the large central buying offices, which make profits at the expense of both producers and consumers. The timid, vague proposals in the text are neither sufficient nor wholly satisfactory, but at least they exist. That is why we have voted in favour.

**Pascale Gruny (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) The state of the dairy market has worsened considerably over the last 12 months: the price of milk has fallen by 30% in a year, which is the sharpest fall seen in the last 20 years. We therefore urgently need to introduce new forms of regulation at European level to ensure that the dairy sector is not just dependent on the rules of the market but can actually prove a match for them. Currently, the instability in producers' incomes does not allow the best allocation to be made of resources that are vital for future investments in the sector. Therefore, the European Commission has a duty to facilitate contractual relations within the agri-food chain, so as to balance the relations between the various operators in the sector, stabilise the markets and prevent market risks. It must also encourage better organisation within the sectors. In addition, consideration should be given to whether an increase in milk quotas might have a positive impact on producer prices. Europe must act now. We can wait no longer. If we do not act, we will run the risk of seeing the European dairy sector suffer lasting damage, thus depriving our fragile rural areas of the hub of their economies.

**Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)**, *in writing*. – (FR) The milk strike is growing in size in the countries of Europe, with its striking images of milk poured away into the fields. In the face of the concerns of dairy producers, the European Parliament has adopted a position. In this context, I voted for the creation of a EUR 600 million fund in the budget planned by the EU for 2010 to provide assistance to milk producers, who are currently experiencing a serious crisis, unprecedented within their sector, and are wrestling with the laws of supply and demand on the world dairy market.

My socialist colleagues and I have also tabled an amendment calling for the suspension of dairy quotas as currently in force, with a view to bringing about a rise in prices. We ought also to adopt cyclical measures, in addition to the market management measures already taken, as the latter have proved to be ineffective in the face of price volatility.

**Elisabeth Jeggle (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) The dairy sector is currently in the midst of a crisis on an unprecedented scale: producer prices have fallen dramatically, consumer prices have risen and many farms in the EU are fighting for survival. The Commission has stood by and watched this development for far too long. In our motion for a resolution, which is supported by nearly all the groups, we make it clear that the decisions made in November 2008 in connection with the health check are not sufficient for the current situation. The comprehensive agricultural reform that we have adopted is too little.

If the basic conditions have changed, the Commission must seize the initiative and implement a measure that will help the farmers of the EU. In our resolution we call for comprehensive measures: market stabilisation, sales promotion, a comprehensive school milk programme, increase of the maximum amount of minimum payments from EUR 7 500 to EUR 15 000 for all areas of agricultural production, an early retirement scheme/quota buy-back scheme, the strengthening of producer organisations, proper labelling of dairy products, export credit insurance similar to that which exists in the US and, for particular measures, the dairy fund. With this resolution, we are ready to take responsibility for European agriculture. That is why I voted in favour of the present resolution.

**Marine Le Pen (NI)**, *in writing*. – (FR) The dairy sector is in danger. For months now, dairy producers have been producing at a loss whilst the price of milk has not fallen for consumers: large distributors have been

the ones to benefit. Thousands of small French producers are under threat of bankruptcy. The general dairy strike, which is the last step by the producers to try to make themselves heard, and not to die amid public indifference, is currently spreading in many European countries, correspondingly jeopardising many jobs in other branches of the dairy sector. There is an urgent need to find effective solutions for this key sector of French and European agriculture, and to make a radical policy change, since – let us not beat around the bush – it is the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and their ultra-liberalism that hold sole responsibility for this tragedy. We need to take urgent action: to maintain the quotas principle after 2015; to bring in an immediate reduction in these quotas in order to end the slump in the price of milk; to set prices in line with the costs actually incurred by independent producers; and to establish full transparency in the setting of prices by large distributors. Farmers expect strong action.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE)**, *in writing*. – (DE) We saved the banks, because we had to. That was recognised and accepted by all responsible politicians.

Now we are faced with a situation in the agricultural industry where we need to prevent the imminent bankruptcy of farmers, particularly in the dairy sector, because prices no longer cover production costs. However, we need to ensure that our production potential is sufficient to supply European citizens with high quality foodstuffs.

I belong to a generation that experienced food rationing and the need to hoard food in order to have enough to eat. Hopefully, things will never get that bad again. However, those who have never experienced hunger do not understand how important a strong common agricultural policy is for Europe.

We need security of supply and not just in the energy sector.

I would ask you to consider the fact that, if too many farms in too many regions are forced to cease operating because we are not able or prepared to take the necessary short-term measures that are called for in our resolution, the cost to the EU and the Member States would be many times greater than the cost of taking appropriate short-term measures within the framework of the common agricultural policy.

The army of unemployed is large enough. Allowing farms to go bust would be irresponsible on social, economic and environmental grounds.

I hope that our warning will be heeded.

**Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL)**, *in writing*. – (ES) I voted for the joint motion for a resolution, despite regarding it as inadequate. The proposal to end the milk quota scheme in 2015, and until then to increase the quota by 1% per year, will, in practical terms, legalise the surpluses which already exist in certain countries, which are being produced above their quotas and which are then exported at very low prices, pushing down market prices, in many countries below the cost of production. The measures which the Commission is trying to apply have the ultimate objective of deregulation, and therefore liberalisation of the dairy farming sector in Europe.

We are totally against these measures as they serve the interests of the large companies, in the same way as the common agricultural policy reforms, to the detriment of small-scale producers. We support measures to regulate the dairy farming sector.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI)**, *in writing*. – (DE) In recent months a situation has developed on the dairy markets that is threatening the existence of many dairy farmers. The price of their products has fallen rapidly. Small and medium-sized farms have been particularly hard hit and they are having to draw on their reserves in order to survive. For this reason, rapid action by the EU is sought. The Commission has previously been far too tentative in its attempts to get to grips with the crisis, for which it is partly responsible because of its decision to increase the delivery quotas.

Parliament's initiatives, most of which are also referred to in this motion for a resolution, are therefore even more welcome. These include, first and foremost, the creation of a milk fund to which EUR 600 million will be allocated, measures for increasing demand for dairy products, greater quality control and precise labelling obligations. With a view to supporting our farmers, it was therefore a foregone conclusion for me to vote in favour of the proposed motion for a resolution and the measures it contains.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE)**, *in writing*. – (FR) A warning bell: that is the essence of our resolution; it calls upon the Commission and the Council to take emergency measures in order to find a way out of the crisis, the full force of which is being felt by milk producers. In Belgium yesterday this crisis took on a new dimension

when over 2 000 producers poured away 3 million litres of milk in Ciney. Ascribing sole responsibility for this to the removal of quotas is a way of cutting the debate short. That is why I opposed Amendment 28, calling for a freeze in quotas, as too simplistic. The main causes lie elsewhere: a fall in demand, fierce competition worldwide, and above all, the unacceptable profit margins of the distribution companies, which have been criticised by many consumer associations. That is what led me, in paragraphs 17 and 18, of which I am the author, to ask the Commission for an enquiry to determine whether there are any cartels operating. The credibility of the Commission is at stake. On the other hand, I supported Amendment 1, which extends the initiative taken by 16 Member States and calls for a balance to be re-established between the various operators in the sector. Personally, I support the fixing of a minimum price for milk in each country.

**Marc Tarabella (S&D), in writing.** – (FR) Looking ahead to the vote on the resolution on the crisis in the dairy farming sector, I had tabled and endorsed some amendments for short-term regulation of the dairy market, specifically through a freeze in the increase of quotas, or a temporary reduction in quotas (of 3% to 5%). However, all these measures have been rejected by the European Parliament. Producers have a right to expect Parliament to put forward the radical measures they need. Despite certain positive elements, this resolution does not meet these expectations: that is why I abstained from the final vote.

#### **- Joint motion for a resolution: Energy security (RC-B7-0040/2009)**

**Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) Europe is highly dependent on imported energy. To reduce our energy dependency, we must take action on energy efficiency, the diversification of energy sources through the increasing use of renewables, and the diversification of countries of origin and transit. Consolidation of the internal energy market throughout Europe is also very important for increasing energy security. Gas pipeline and electricity grids covering the whole of Europe must be given priority. In this respect, two of the projects included in the economic recovery plan are highly important for Portugal: the electricity grid link between Portugal and Spain, which will help to consolidate the Iberian electricity market; and the link between Spain and France, to prevent the Iberian Peninsula from becoming an energy island. The Commission and the Council are called on to make every effort to ensure that the development of renewable energy projects in the countries of southern Europe with a high potential for renewable energy is encouraged. Large areas of the Alentejo region have the highest solar potential in the whole of Europe, as shown by solar radiation distribution maps.

**Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing.** – (PT) I voted in favour of the European Parliament's resolution on external aspects of energy security because I believe the creation of a genuine common energy policy will be decisive for ensuring the security of energy supplies in the European Union. Nonetheless, a properly functioning internal energy market and the diversification of energy sources will also be extremely important in preventing future crises and interruptions in energy supply. In this respect, I think increasing investment in renewable energies and energy efficiency should be a core element of European policies.

**Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing.** – (PT) The European Union's energy dependence, the strategic need to reduce it and the threats to the EU's stability caused by such fragility are well known and have been widely debated.

In that respect, my country has levels of dependence that far exceed the European average, revealing the absolute failure of successive governments in this area and raising considerable fears about a possible crisis in the energy markets.

In view of the difficult relations with some of our main suppliers, the limits to the diversity of energy sources and the inadequacy of supply capacity, I feel it is important for all the Member States that the European Union should act *en bloc* to protect its common interests and show that it can impose them in a very demanding negotiating context.

Similarly, I believe the Member States must not shirk their responsibilities but should decide on varied energy baskets, in which all the main alternatives, including nuclear, should be examined, evaluated without bias and put into practice when they are found to be useful, with priority for those that can be produced most efficiently, safely and cleanly.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – (FR) Europe will not be able, at least in the short term, to rid itself of its dependence on countries outside Europe for its energy supplies. It is true that in order to reduce these constraints, we need to diversify the forms of our dependence, from the viewpoint both of energy sources and of supplier countries. To be honest, however, I do not see the point in placing ourselves in the clutches of Turkey, in a move motivated more, it seems, by hostility to Russia than by energy concerns. Turkey is the



necessary point of transit for this famous Nabucco gas pipeline of yours, which has systematically received priority over other projects. This would give the country a significant means of applying pressure.

With regard to Desertec, here too I fail to see the point in becoming dependent upon what is, for the moment, a project which is part of a private initiative. In fact, I believe that it is contradictory to want to conduct a centralised energy policy, in the hands of the Commission, and at the same time to hand the European energy sector over to private operators, entailing a rise in prices and a reduction in services, and adversely affecting energy choices. Above all, I believe that energy is too crucial an issue to be left to Commission officials to deal with, or to be abandoned to the profit motive of a few companies.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing.** – (DE) This joint motion for a resolution on external aspects of energy security contains important options for Europe's future energy policy. In particular, I consider the significant increase in the proportion of renewable energy sources in the current energy mix to be particularly important and I am therefore also in favour of the Desertec project planned by a private group of investors.

This is not least intended to reduce the dependence of the EU on individual states from which we have hitherto acquired our fossil fuels. The planned Nabucco project will not, unfortunately, contribute to this, since, it will leave the EU open to blackmail with regard to the planned accession of Turkey to the EU. Given the direct influence of the Islamic regime in Turkey, the project in its current form is therefore to be rejected. For this reason, despite numerous positive elements in this text, I abstained from voting on the text as a whole in the final vote.

**Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR), in writing.** – We recognise the different concerns of our various allies. However, from a British perspective, efforts to achieve a more coherent EU approach to energy security do not require the Lisbon Treaty or the extension of European Commission competence. Sufficient mechanisms are already in place which would enable EU Member States to speak with one voice in dealing with Russia, should we so wish.

The references in this resolution to the Lisbon Treaty are highly detrimental. British Conservatives are vehemently opposed to the ratification of this Treaty and to further attempts at EU political integration. I regret also the failure to make any reference to nuclear energy among the mix of sustainable and diverse energy supply sources that will be required in the coming years. Energy security is first and foremost the responsibility of our own governments.

## 6. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

(The sitting was suspended at 12.55 and resumed at 15.00.)

IN THE CHAIR: PÁL SCHMITT

*Vice-President*

## 7. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting : see Minutes

## 8. Situation in Taiwan following the recent typhoon (debate)

**President.** – The next item is the Commission's statement on the situation in Taiwan following the recent typhoon.

**Meglana Kuneva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, first of all, let me express my sympathy to the people of Taiwan who suffered as result of Typhoon Morakot and its consequences. The European Community Mechanism for Civil Protection made a contribution to the overall relief effort and showed Europe's solidarity with the population of Taiwan.

On 7 August 2009 Taiwan was hit by Typhoon Morakot, causing major flooding and mudslides. Over 1 50 people were killed and tens of thousands displaced. Transport infrastructure, including roads and bridges, was damaged and communication networks were interrupted. Around 700 000 homes were left without drinking water. Taiwan requested international assistance on 12 August 2009. In response the European Commission activated the Community Civil Protection Mechanism. The mechanism facilitates and coordinates Member States' in-kind assistance during major emergencies.

The European Commission deployed a coordination and assessment team to Taiwan to assess the needs and to assist the Government in its relief efforts. The team undertook several assessment missions to the affected regions, sharing its findings and recommendations with the local authorities and international partners. The mechanism team also facilitated the delivery of in-kind assistance such as water purification equipment donated by Sweden and Poland, which was delivered to the most affected areas in Taiwan.

The rapid delivery of this assistance ensured a tangible expression of European solidarity. The presence of the European team on the ground was also received positively. The Community Civil Protection Mechanism is a very visible sign of European solidarity with countries worldwide, and I am convinced that it will continue to grow in strength and effectiveness.

Natural disasters can affect any country in the world. They often carry a heavy human, economic and environmental cost. In the future, climate change makes it likely that we will face more disasters. In this regard, solidarity with other countries hit by disaster remains one of the pillars of the European disaster-management policy. I look forward to continuing to work with the European Parliament to make sure our European emergency-management tools are fit for purpose.

**Thomas Mann**, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Republic of Taiwan was shaken to its foundations on 8 August. Typhoon Morakot swept across the island with unbridled force, leaving more than 750 people dead. Thousands lost their belongings and large areas of land were laid waste. The damage amounts to more than EUR 2.5 billion. The reconstruction of an infrastructure that has been widely damaged will take months. As a token of our solidarity, we Europeans wished to support the Taiwanese people by providing disaster relief.

Mrs Kuneva, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) supports the initiatives that the European Commission has instigated. It is all the more surprising that the Taiwanese embassies were instructed to refuse all foreign aid. That led to strong criticism and on 13 August to much needed adjustments to a completely abortive crisis management programme. Shortly after that, Prime Minister Liu Chao-shiuan resigned.

Another cause of irritation was the visit to Taiwan by the Dalai Lama over several days in September. He merely wanted to pray for the victims with the survivors. Sympathy has long been the message of the much-acclaimed speeches and books of the Dalai Lama. Once again the Chinese government made loud protests and brought a huge amount of pressure to bear. It is outrageous that Peking has once again made a political issue out of a purely humanitarian act by the Dalai Lama. Taiwan must ask itself whose side it is actually on. President Ma Ying-jeou only allowed the Nobel Peace Prize winner to enter the country after strong protests from his own people.

Commissioner, we need to intensify our dialogue with Taiwan – on humanitarian issues, but also on the issue of our fundamental values. Democracy, human rights and solidarity are inseparable, even in this emerging Asiatic country.

**Victor Boştinaru**, *on behalf of the S-D Group*. – Mr President, first of all, please let me express my sincere sorrow for the huge tragedy that hit Taiwan on 8 August and in particular for all the people that were killed by the incredible energy of the devastation from this major disaster.

Morakot was the deadliest typhoon to hit Taiwan in nearly 50 years, ravaging the island in early August and leaving about 700 people dead or missing, forcing the evacuation of thousands and burying hundreds of village homes in mudslides.

On this occasion China showed great sensitivity by sending immediate aid to help Taiwanese victims. Not only was the Chinese Government ready to assist the island, but also private companies and organisations of different kinds including the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits and the mainland Red Cross Society.

Also, the Chinese population afforded help with fundraising events organised to relieve the island from the disaster.

According to the last figures, the Chinese mainland has so far donated to the typhoon victims about a CNY 1 billion, which is the equivalent of nearly USD 150 million. An important role in this situation was played by the several hundreds of prefabricated houses that were sent from China to Taiwan in order to put a roof over those who had lost their dwellings.

I would like to underline the fact that the European Union, attached to the One China policy, welcomes the help that China offered Taiwan on this tragic occasion because this shows an improvement in the relations between the two territories, and it is clear that an improvement in such relations can lead to greater stability in this region.

I also think, and with this I conclude, that, given the dimension of the disaster, the European Union should make use of one of its core values – solidarity – and offer Taiwan additional material and financial assistance in order to help with the massive task of reconstruction.

**Charles Tannock**, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, the scenes of devastation and destruction caused by Typhoon Morakot will remain in our minds for a long time, but many people in Taiwan will be living with the consequences of this tragedy for years to come. Over 700 people lost their lives and thousands of others have faced major disruption.

The Taiwanese Government under President Ma responded promptly by deploying soldiers to the worst-affected communities and areas, and requesting assistance from the international community. The Swedish EU Presidency and the Commission should be congratulated on their work in activating the Community Civil Protection Mechanism. I do hope now that the Commission will commit to longer-term assistance to Taiwan to enable full recovery of its people and economy and the rebuilding of the infrastructure.

I have no doubt of the gratitude of the people and Government of Taiwan for the solidarity and support shown by the EU. Furthermore, as chairman of the EP Taiwan Friendship Group, I look forward to finding out the latest situation when I lead a delegation of MEPs to Taiwan next month.

The calamity that has affected Taiwan may well become more commonplace, both in Taiwan and around the world, as a result of climate change. It is therefore essential that Taiwan, as an island vulnerable to such meteorological phenomena and as a major global industrial power, is enabled to participate meaningfully and with dignity in appropriate international organisations, not least those related to weather and climate change. In particular, Taiwan should be allowed to participate in the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and the World Meteorological Organisation.

Both the Council and the Commission support Taiwan's meaningful participation in United Nations bodies now, and I hope they will use the opportunity, arising from this disaster, that has now been presented to Taiwan to promote Taiwan's involvement in these structures.

**Fiorello Provera**, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as well as offering my condolences and support to the people of Taiwan, I would like to emphasise the timeliness of the European Union's humanitarian effort in this disaster.

The Commission has played its part, and many Member States have sent aid or teams of experts. The People's Republic of China itself has helped the Taiwanese authorities, and this is a gesture that I consider to be very significant. However, if we want to provide the Taiwanese authorities and the countries of the region with structural help to cope with threats of this kind in the future, the European Union should support Taiwan's admission as an observer to the World Meteorological Organisation and to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Taiwan's admission as an observer has already yielded some good results in other international sectoral organisations such as the WTO, and, in this case, too, Taiwan's admission could be a practical form of prevention and could in future limit the risks for the 23 million inhabitants of the island and for the region as a whole.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE)**. – (FR) Mr President, Taiwan is just now emerging from a dreadful natural disaster, unprecedented in the country over the last 50 years. It is our duty not only to express our solidarity but also to play an active part in the reconstruction of the parts of the island that have been devastated.

Happily, after typhoon Morakot hit, the Commission and the Council indicated their willingness to help. I urge them now to provide the concrete aid that the government and the people of that country need, because there is an enormous amount to be done. Appropriate instruments exist at European Union level. They should be put to full use.

This disaster once again poses the issue, as already mentioned by some of my fellow Members, of Taiwan's participation in the various agencies of the United Nations. In principle, the EU institutions encourage this, but it is high time for action to be taken to change things. The Taiwanese authorities did not have access to

meteorological information indicating how serious the typhoon was. This is unacceptable. It is absolutely vital that Taiwan accedes to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and is thus in a position to avoid the worst, since there is no doubt at all that there will be further climatic depressions in the future.

I am the chairman of the Taiwan-Luxembourg association, and I really must say that we should no longer be pressurised by the blackmailing of Communist China, with regard to our relations with Taiwan. Crystal-clear support from the Commission and the Council on this issue is absolutely vital.

**Kriton Arsenis (S&D).** - (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to express my deep sorrow about the humanitarian tragedy in Taiwan and to say that, as the European Union, we must help in any way we can.

We now know that 640 people were killed by Typhoon Morakot and over 192 people are missing. One mudslide wiped an entire village off the map and killed hundreds. However, none of this happened by accident. It was preceded by a prolonged drought, which reduced the capacity of the soil to absorb the rain.

Droughts, floods and a rapid increase in extreme weather are gradually increasing due to climate change. A typhoon is caused in sea areas with a surface temperature of 27 °C. The increase in temperature will considerably increase both the number of typhoons and their intensity. To date, 120 million people are living in areas affected by typhoons. Between 1980 and 2000, there were 250 000 typhoon victims.

For all these reasons, our heart must be in Copenhagen, where we shall decide in December if each of our countries will separately defend its own temporary, short-term interests or if we shall all fight for the planet, our home, in a fight to reverse climate change.

So will the developed and developing world stop contributing to disasters such as the disaster in Taiwan? If so, action is needed. We need to pledge to making the necessary commitments for the necessary reduction, in order to prevent the temperature rising above 2 °C. We also need to put our hand in our pocket to provide financial assistance to the developing world, so that it becomes part of the solution and helps to combat climate change.

We are the developing world that caused climate change. We are the polluters and, according to the 'polluter pays' principle which we ourselves adopted, we must pay. We must pay by giving financial support to developing countries.

**Bastiaan Belder (EFD).** - (NL) Mr President, this was a disaster on an unprecedented scale for Taiwan. There is great tragedy in the mountains. Whole villages have disappeared and there are a thousand people thought dead or missing. Thousands of survivors, if not more, are being put up in military camps for the time being. This is how Menno Goedhart, the highest representative in Taiwan from my home country, the Netherlands, depicts the devastating effects of typhoon Morakot. First and foremost, I would like to express my sympathies, from this Parliament, to the government and citizens of Taiwan.

In addition to the practical assistance that Menno Goedhart is currently offering his Taiwanese friends, and also whilst appreciating what has already been done from the European side, I would nonetheless like to ask a couple of questions of the Commission in relation to the strengthening of European-Taiwanese relations. First of all, the Commission will be putting forward a proposal next month to relax the visa regime for Taiwanese citizens. The United Kingdom and Ireland have already set a good example in this regard. Secondly, a recent European report demonstrated very clearly that there would be enormous benefits for both Taiwan and the European Union in agreeing trade enhancing measures (TEM). Does the Commission agree with this urgent conclusion?

Finally, Mr President, I would like to lend my full support to those of my fellow Members who have already argued for the ending of Taiwan's incredible international isolation. Such isolation is truly intolerable, certainly when it comes to people's lives, wherever they may be.

**Ville Itälä (PPE).** - (FI) Mr President, Taiwan met with human disaster on a huge scale on 8 August. The incident took a heavy toll and the economic damage was immense. Now it is time for us to help. It is time for us to show solidarity with the citizens of Taiwan. We have to show compassion, but, in addition, we have to give financial support, and, as the Commissioner said here, we have to adopt crisis management tools now. We now have to provide the Taiwanese with all the help that is humanly possible. I also wish to express

my support for the idea of longer-term assistance to Taiwan as proposed by Mr Tannock, for the best possible results, and so that we can show that they too are human beings and, above all, they are our friends.

**Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D).** – (PL) I would like to thank the Commissioner for this information. However, my question is of a slightly different nature. Taiwan has most recently been struck by tragedy. However, we are fully aware of the fact that many disasters of this kind have occurred in the past, and that many more will occur in the future. Therefore, I would like to ask the Commissioner the following question. Does the European Union, and the Commission in particular, have any standard procedures in place for dealing with this kind of situation? Is there an emergency action package or provisions for specific countries? Is there also a long-term plan of action?

I think it would be unfortunate if we reacted to these tragedies in different ways, depending on the situation in different countries. I think that, as is the case in the military forces, we have to establish certain standard procedures in crisis situations. That is what I wanted to ask the Commissioner.

**Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE).** – (NL) Mr President, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, like many groups in this House, sympathises with the population of Taiwan and we are pleased that the Commission reacted as it did. The Commission must continue in this vein. The big problem, however, alongside this human catastrophe, is, of course, Taiwan's isolation. It is quite possible to maintain a one-China policy whilst at the same time establishing good working relations with Taiwan. Taiwan could easily play its part in the World Health Organization as an observer. The same applies to the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. All of this is possible and is no obstacle to the one-China policy. I agree with Mr Belder when it comes to relaxing the visa regime and I also concur with the good things he had to say about Mr Goedhart, the Dutch representative in Taipei. I think, therefore, that there is no need for us to continue isolating Taiwan. Working relations, that is what it is about.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** – Mr President, first of all I would like to express my deep condolences to the families of those who died during the Morakot typhoon.

It is regrettable that hundreds have died, others lost their loved ones, and many more were injured.

As many observers have noted, the number of victims could have been lower if the Government had reacted in a more coordinated manner to the typhoon. The Government failed to predict the seriousness of the tropical storm approaching the island. At the same time, we know that Taiwan has a highly developed high-tech sector and is one of the largest manufacturers of GPS systems in the world.

Part of the blame should be attributed to the fact that Taiwan is not yet a member of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), as has already been mentioned by some colleagues. Taiwan could have been better pre-warned if the WMO provided it with timely information. I am therefore convinced that the time is right again to raise the issue of Taiwan's membership in the WMO, not only for political reasons but also for humanitarian ones.

**Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D).** – (RO) Mr President, Commissioner, the typhoon which struck Taiwan has affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed tens of thousands of dwellings. The humanitarian aid provided by the European Union must be unconditional. The aim is to help victims as quickly as possible.

The European Union is an active donor, working with non-governmental organisations and the United Nations' specialist agencies to provide funds for medical treatment, logistical support and the reconstruction of devastated areas. The Copenhagen Conference will have a great deal to discuss, and we are preparing to take some measures aimed at a future post-Kyoto agreement on reducing polluting emissions. Therefore, we are mostly discussing measures for reducing the causes that lead to climate change.

As part of the Copenhagen Conference, I would like to call for particular attention to be focused as well on adaptation measures, as we will continually have to deal with powerful storms, flooding, prolonged drought or forest fires. I also urge the European Union to provide humanitarian support to Taiwan, along with support for reconstruction and, in particular, for the population.

**Meglena Kuneva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, I will take the questions in order.

First of all, on the assistance which the Commission is providing to Taiwan to meet the ongoing needs of its people, which was the main point of the question by Mr Mann: Taiwan has been informed of the Commission's

post-disaster needs-assessment mechanism, but we have not received any requests so far. If such a request comes, we will take it into consideration.

Then, on the Commission position regarding the current state of cross-Strait relations, which was the question from Mr Boştinaru, the Commission welcomes the rapprochement between Taiwan and China during the last year. This has made it possible to improve cross-Strait relations, reducing tensions between the two, and to promote bilateral issues such as direct air and sea links.

We strongly support the bilateral discussions between the two parties that may allow further progress. We also welcome the Chinese assistance.

On the question concerning the participation of Taiwan in the World Meteorological Organisation from Mrs Lulling and Mrs Andrikiénė, and also from Mr van Baalen and Mr Tannock: in line with the position expressed by the European Union in a statement issued in September 2008 and the EU's One China policy, the European Commission supports, where appropriate, the meaningful participation of Taiwan in international organisations. We will continue to do so.

On the questions from Mrs Lulling and Mr Mann, as to the assistance provided, the Community's Civil Protection Mechanism provided assistance from Sweden and Poland. This help was received with gratitude which was acknowledged by President Ma to Commission President Barroso.

On the question concerning the visit by the Dalai Lama to Taiwan in the aftermath of the typhoon, the visit by the Dalai Lama was a decision taken by the Taiwanese authorities, and the European Commission has no comment on it.

On the question raised by Mr Belder, about the Commission position on granting visa-free access to Taiwanese visiting the EU: the Commission is considering, within the framework of the revision of the appropriate legislation, the possibility of updating the list of countries and entities which may not be subject to visa requirements in respect of visits to the European Union, especially the Schengen Area, and in this context it will also consider the case of Taiwan.

Coming to the question by Mr Zemke on the issue of standard procedures in the event of disasters and how we will proceed in future in such cases, the Commission focuses on two priorities: the first is continuing work on preparedness and response, and the second is the prevention of disasters.

First, we deem it important to ensure the availability of EU assistance at all times. With Parliament's support, in 2008 we launched a pilot project and a preparatory action on the EU rapid-response capability. From this initial experience, if appropriate, the Commission will present further proposals for the development of the EU rapid-response capability, funded from national resources earmarked for EU operations.

Second, we aim to have a comprehensive approach to disaster prevention at EU level. In February 2009 the Commission published a communication on a Community approach to the prevention of natural and man-made disasters. We would welcome Parliament's feedback on this communication.

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

## **9. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law(debate)**

### **9.1. Murder of human rights activists in Russia**

**President.** – I have received six motions for<sup>(3)</sup> a resolution concerning the murders of human rights lawyers in Russia (Rule 122).

**Heidi Hautala, author.** – (FI) Mr President, we really ought to spare a thought here for the human rights activists who were recently murdered in the North Caucasus and light a candle in memory of them. We have to remember that Natalia Estemirova, Zarema Sadulayeva, Alik Dzhabrailov and many others who have suffered and lost their lives in their defence of human rights deserve the support of all of us. Unfortunately, we were not able to support them enough while they were alive.

<sup>(3)</sup> See Minutes.

It is alarming that Russia has not been able to conduct criminal investigations rigorous enough to solve these murders and bring the guilty to justice. I have noted that the European Union has communicated with Russia officially on the subject. Quite obviously, however, our efforts are insufficient, and we will have to consider seriously how we can make the rule of law work in Russia and how we can raise this issue's profile a lot higher when we negotiate the new partnership and cooperation agreement with that country.

We also need to think about how we might support human rights defenders in Russia better than we do now. We should discuss whether we could offer protection to those in danger and whether the EU institutions can arrange visas for them promptly, so that they can escape from Russia, where they and their lives are at risk. In the opinion of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, it is important that the European Parliament should have a centre which disseminates information on the situation of human rights activists whose lives are in danger and which endeavours to help them in collaboration with the other institutions. There is much we can do. Anna Politkovskaya once said that the West can do so much, but the West does so little.

(Applause)

**Véronique De Keyser**, *author*. – (FR) Mr President, I am going to use the brief amount of time I have to clarify the position of my group, which did not sign the joint declaration and which is tabling a separate resolution.

I would like to tell you, firstly, that we are fully in agreement with the joint resolution with regard to Natalia Estemirova, Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov.

We have been shocked by these new assassinations which, in fact, are just a sample of the assassinations of human rights activists in Chechnya.

In our resolution, we have called for exactly the same thing as the joint resolution calls for: we condemn the attack, we call for an enquiry, and we express our concern over the deterioration of human rights for militants in Russia.

Where our position diverges is with regard to the additional reference in the joint resolution to all human rights defenders and to the situation in the North Caucasus region in general. We think that there may be other places in which to make these points – and I undertake to do so – particularly in the resolution that will precede the summit between the European Union and Russia. We would like this agenda on human rights activists and the protection of these activists to form part of that resolution, but also of all the negotiations that we have in the future with Russia.

So, the problem here, I would add, is simply one of time and of place. This is a political issue that should be dealt with politically and not just here, when we are dealing with urgent cases. That is why we have decided to make the distinction but, of course, on the substance of the problem, we are fully in agreement with the other groups.

**Renate Weber**, *author*. – Mr President, allow me to present the Chamber with a few facts. Only this year in January, Stanislav Markelov, the human rights lawyer who represented the assassinated journalist Anna Politkovskaya, was gunned down in the middle of the afternoon in downtown Moscow. On the same occasion, Anastasia Baburova, a journalist who tried to protect him, was also shot and died.

In July, Natalia Estemirova, a well-known Russian human rights activist and journalist, was found dead in Ingushetia after being abducted by armed men in neighbouring Chechnya. Less than a month later, another non-governmental activist, Zarema Sadulayeva, and her husband were abducted and killed.

In August, journalist Malik Akhmedilov was shot dead shortly after leaving his home in Dagestan. Six outstanding journalists and human rights activists died in less than eight months.

These abductions and murders are only the peak of what results from the deterioration of the human rights situation in Russia, where independent voices, including lawyers, journalists and other activists, face increasing violence, threats and unjustified prosecution.

Human rights violations in Russia, and especially in North Caucasus, can no longer be ignored. We cannot be so naïve as to believe that super-powerful Russia, with one of the strongest intelligence services in the world, is not capable of finding the perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

We all, regardless of our political colour, have to understand that impunity for attacks against human rights defenders will contribute to more violence and a growing culture of lawlessness. The Russian authorities must ensure the physical safety and freedom of movement and expression of human rights defenders, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on human rights defenders.

**Bernd Posselt, author.** – (DE) Mr President, our former Oldest Member, Otto von Habsburg, was once asked whether he regretted being an MEP rather than an emperor. He said no, because if he was an emperor he would have to call a fool ‘Your Excellency’ but as an MEP he could call a fool a fool. I am reminded of this story when human rights issues come up.

We are not a diplomatic body; we are a political parliamentary body. We can speak the truth. There is a saying that goes ‘the fish stinks from the head down’. It is not the case – and I would like to thank Mrs Weber for giving such a clear speech – that these incidents and murders in the Caucasus are in any way random or the work of some dark force, but rather, since Mr Putin came to power, which is linked to the matter of Chechnya and the mysterious explosion of houses in Moscow, there has been a trail of blood there for years that always leads back to Chechnya and affects innocent people: civilians and, in particular, human rights activists who, like those mentioned – and many of these people were known to us personally – not only work for the human rights of Chechens but also for a democratic Russia, for an understanding between the peoples of Chechnya and Russia and for peace in the Caucasus. These people are being murdered one after the other.

Mrs De Keyser, this is why it was necessary to hold an emergency debate. We will make ourselves a laughing stock if a woman who received praise in this House and who visited us in Strasbourg on account of her commitment to human rights is murdered in front of our eyes and we then postpone the debate on the subject to some later date.

Russia is watching closely to see whether we are in a position to respond immediately – and we must respond immediately by saying very clearly: put an end to the murders, to the violation of human rights and grant freedom to Chechnya and Russia, but above all put an end to the systematic violation of human rights and murders in mysterious circumstances.

**Tomasz Piotr Poręba (ECR), author.** – (PL) Once again, the issue of human rights violations in Russia has appeared on the European Parliament’s agenda.

In addition to the systematic persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, human rights activists are regularly being murdered. Journalists and NGO workers in Russia risk their lives every day in the course of their work. Threats, kidnappings, torture, arbitrary detentions and murders are becoming commonplace. The fact that the Russian authorities are not actively investigating these crimes, that no real results have been achieved and that the perpetrators remain at large, not only proves the complete ineffectiveness of the authorities’ actions, but also their tacit consent and indifference.

Respect for human rights should be a key issue in relations between the European Union and Russia. It is our duty to demand that Russia ensures that proper and effective investigations are implemented, that the perpetrators are punished and that it puts an end to these horrific murders.

**Cornelia Ernst, author.** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as a new MEP, let me start by saying that human rights issues are also extremely important to my party, the German Left, and that we condemn any violation of human rights – irrespective of where or by whom they are committed. That has nothing to do with interfering in national affairs.

I have for years been genuinely concerned and outraged by the fact that, time and again, human rights activists involved with the situation in Chechnya are being murdered. Natalia Estemirova, Stanislav Markelov, Zarema Sadulayeva, these are examples of murders that are truly shocking. It is therefore important that we in this House concern ourselves with this issue.

I am concerned that cases like the murder of Anna Politkovskaya are not investigated. If this process is now re-opened, I most sincerely hope that the perpetrators are found and arrested, because otherwise there is a risk of more bloodshed and it will be seen as a licence to commit acts of this kind. What we expect is simply for an immediate and full investigation to be carried out into these murders and for this matter to be dealt with ruthlessly, for Russia not to wait any longer but to take up the fight to protect human rights itself. It must not be the case that protecting human rights somehow condemns people to death. I also believe that



the forthcoming EU-Russia summit needs to tackle these issues as a matter of urgency, and not merely as side issues, but with the prominence that they deserve.

Personally, I also expect human rights issues to be discussed honestly in this House. I would have preferred not to debate issues such as these on Thursday afternoon and I believe this topic should also concern us even if it was about enterprise and trade. Such issues are often given secondary priority. That is what we want to change and that is also something I wanted to say here.

**Filip Kaczmarek, on behalf of the PPE group.** – (PL) Mr President, in a country with a high crime rate, one could put forward the theory that the deaths of human rights activists are a coincidence. They are coincidental because, generally speaking, many people fall victim to crime in these countries. Today, on 17 September, I have to remind you all of a sad anniversary, namely the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland. Following this invasion, Soviet troops shot at least 21 768 Polish citizens. Why have I mentioned this fact? It is because the Russians now claim that this was an ordinary crime, in the same way that the murders of human rights activists are ‘ordinary crimes’.

The scale on which human rights activists are being murdered in Russia is such that to interpret this phenomenon as the result of ‘ordinary crime’ is utterly reckless. The theory that these murders are ‘coincidental’ is not a viable one. The systematic nature of these killings means that there has to be something in the political and social climate in Russia that has caused such frequent killings. The moral crisis in that country, a tendency to trivialise death, dehumanisation, relativism and vanishing values are to blame for the fact that this problem is not taken seriously. I think that our resolution is well-balanced and will help the Russians resolve this matter.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis, on behalf of the S&D Group.** – (LT) The Social Democrat Group cannot remain indifferent to the recent murders of human rights activists in Russia. The deaths of Anna Politkovskaya, Natalya Estemirova, Zarema Sadulayeva, Andrei Kulagin must not remain meaningless. We condemn utterly the perpetrators of these barbarous actions and the fact that sadly in some regions of Russia there is an atmosphere of impunity and political murders are not investigated.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has promised that the perpetrators of the murders will be found and punished. His reaction was stronger than the previous president’s, but so far these are only words. Time will tell if the Russian authorities are able to carry through the commitments made, so important to the country’s citizens and the international community. In our opinion, evaluation in the proposed resolution of Russian actions in the Northern Caucasus has exceeded the resolution’s area of application, therefore the social democrats have decided to adopt their own separate document. The social democrats are convinced that the human rights situation in Russia would really improve if EU-Russia human rights consultations were stepped up. The European Parliament, the State Duma, civil, social and human rights organisations in the EU and Russia should make an active contribution to these consultations. We stress that the protection of human rights must be discussed at length at the next meeting of the leaders of the EU and Russia. This matter is becoming an inherent part of the new agreement between the EU and Russia.

**Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE).** – (LT) This debate and the European Parliament resolution on the murder of human rights activists in Russia is particularly important, especially now as we hear one news report after another on the murders in Russia of the human rights defenders Natalya Estemirova, Alik Jabrailov, Zarema Sadulayeva and others. The European Union cannot remain indifferent to the brutal killing of human rights activists. In our relations with Russia we must underline and we do underline that investigations into these murders take too long and as a rule end without establishing who was guilty. Such an unacceptable practice is becoming the norm in Russia, especially in the case of crimes in Chechnya, where impunity is thriving. One of our fundamental values is respect for human rights, human dignity and human life, and no pragmatic interests can be above these values. I think that as a matter of honour Russian President Dmitry Medvedev should ensure that everything is done to fully investigate the kidnapping and murder cases involving human rights defenders, and to bring those who are guilty to justice.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE).** – Mr President, the human rights situation in Russia has changed for the worse. We now call on the Russian authorities to do everything in their power to ensure the protection of human rights defenders. We know that the crucial thing that is lacking is a will to do that ‘everything’. It can be done, as the Kremlin exercises a decisive influence on Russia’s power structures and judiciary. Because of this, the failure of the Russian judiciary to protect human rights defenders makes one assume the complicity of the regime in these crimes.

Our message today should be addressed to the EU governments and the Commission. As long as the Kremlin assumes that worries about the fate of human rights defenders remain on the level of declarations, with no consequences on economic relations, Mr Putin and Mr Medvedev can conclude that the EU has not been able to draw lessons from the blatant murder of Anna Politkovskaya.

**Bogusław Sonik (PPE).** – (PL) We are indeed discussing human rights violations in Russia on a day of significant symbolic value. Exactly 70 years ago, on 17 September 1939, the Red Army – in collusion with Hitler – occupied one third of Poland, which was then fighting against the German invasion. Stalin's forces murdered thousands of Poles, and hundreds of thousands were taken away to Soviet labour camps. In Katyn, thousands of Polish officers were murdered on Stalin's orders. To us, 17 September will forever remain a day of shame for Stalin's Russia.

Today's Russia is not brave enough to face this horrific truth. Its current government is providing unconvincing justifications for their former alliance with Hitler. To this day, Moscow is refusing to grant access to the archives on the Katyn massacre.

The histories of many countries contain horrific events. It is a measure of the maturity of a nation when it is able to confront its past and denounce that which needs to be denounced in its history. Today's Germany is an example of such an attitude. It is only then that the past will cease to be a burden for today's Russia and will allow it to enter the community of free and democratic nations with its head held high. Only then will Russia be able, once and for all, to drop the millstone of its Stalinist past from around its neck, and to stop fighting against its own citizens, who are currently risking their lives to defend fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We honour the victims of those murders. We will remember you all.

**Rui Tavares (GUE/NGL).** – (PT) Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. The murder of Natalia Estemirova prompted great sadness in all of us in this House, since we learnt of her abduction on the very day when we gathered here for the first time, and heard of her murder just a few hours later. That is something that cannot fail to move anyone, wherever in the world they may be. As my colleague Mrs Ernst has already said, I firmly believe that the left must defend human rights and the defenders of human rights everywhere, regardless of the country they are in.

These attacks, this onslaught against human rights activists in Russia, have had very worrying effects. They work as intimidation and will certainly be extremely traumatic for all those who want to defend human rights in Russia. They are therefore the first layer in an offensive that will later result in the deterioration of the whole human rights situation, not to mention the human rights of the activists themselves.

The effects of these murders are therefore unpredictable and worrying. Without a swift and effective judicial investigation and with no guarantee that the safety of human rights activists will be respected, the situation may in fact become extremely worrying. That is why I shall take great pleasure in voting in favour of this resolution and in following up its appeals to the Russian authorities to protect human rights activists.

I come from Portugal, from the other end of Europe, and next week I shall be going to Russia. In fact, I am going to the Russian embassy tomorrow to get my visa. I believe that the relations between Europe and Russia are of the greatest importance and that Europe owes much to Russia. The first thing that Europe owes Russia is sincerity and clarity in the protection of the human rights and freedoms of our Russian fellow citizens of Europe.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE).** – (FI) Mr President, your language is so beautiful that I decided to try to thank you in Hungarian: *köszönöm*. Mr Tavares, I would like to respond to your comments. Work on behalf of human rights is not just the concern of the left; it also concerns us on the centre-right, and let us hope this will encourage us to cooperate. Mrs Ernst mentioned something that is absolutely right. We are discussing this here, while in plenary most Members are already on their way home, and we have to work together to make this a political priority.

I was once a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and when the Subcommittee on Human Rights was set up I was a member of that too. When I tabled amendments, sometimes I submitted them to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and my colleagues would ask why I was still tabling amendments on human rights there, as we had a Subcommittee on Human Rights for that. At the time I thought that something was wrong if our Subcommittee on Human Rights was to become a ghetto or human rights were to become the preserve of such a body. Let us work together to prevent this from happening to human rights.

**Kristian Vigenin (S&D).** - (BG) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr Posselt's statement has annoyed me. I would like to underline that Mrs De Keyser's achievements in defending human rights cannot be brought into question in a discussion of this nature. She has proven herself as a key person working on this issue in this House.

I will not under any circumstances allow, and do not believe it is right for us to question the commitment of the S&D Group to the protection of human rights, because we also did this when your group, Mr Posselt, was attempting to trivialise the crimes at Guantanamo and the treatment of prisoners in Iraq by US troops.

On the subject of human rights in Russia, there is indeed a serious problem, which we acknowledge, and the resolution which we are submitting is sufficiently tough and incisive. However, we do think this Parliament needs to focus on the issues, and not simply to come up every time with a long list of problems in our relations with Russia, when these have no effect over there.

What we are doing in this respect is continuing to send a delegation from the S&D Group to talks in Moscow next week, where this particular issue will be raised. Do not use human rights emergencies like this one to produce a long list of issues. This is not the purpose of today's debate.

**Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE).** - (SK) I would like to express my sadness and profound disquiet over the events which took place in June this year in the Russian Federation. I feel shaken by the brutal murders of Russian activists such as Natalia Estemirova and Andrei Kulagin and others who were involved in supporting human rights and who advocated truth and justice. Every effort must be made to detain and punish the murderers. I welcome and support measures which must be taken in order to solve these murders.

There was also a breach of international agreements in August 2008 when, during the conflict between Russia and Georgia, Russian armed forces attacked inhabited areas and failed to protect the civilian population from a violation of their rights by armed fighters from South Ossetia on territory which *de facto* came under Russian control. The Russian Government must state unequivocally that human rights violations will not be tolerated.

**Charles Tannock (ECR).** - Mr President, a culture of criminal impunity is developing in Russia with regard to the abuse of human rights activists. Journalists who dare to challenge the official view of things are harassed; ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately from violent crime, which seems to go unsolved; campaigners for greater freedoms are at best marginalised and at worst forcibly silenced.

It is hard to see precisely where the threat to human rights defenders in Russia comes from, but time and again we see wanton abuses going unpunished and a lackadaisical approach from the judicial authorities.

Russia has got used to the equivocation of the EU. This is clear from the way the Union has reacted to Russia's bullying of Ukraine or Russia's invasion and occupation of sovereign Georgian territory last summer.

Clearly there are vital strategic questions at stake in the EU having good relations with Russia, but we cannot allow these questions to erase our obligation to speak out for our fundamental freedoms and shared European common values, freedoms and values the Russian people themselves should be enabled to share fully in peace and security.

**Krisztina Morvai (NI).** - (HU) I have been involved professionally for 25 years in protecting human rights. This is why, in particular as a lawyer, I feel a deep sense of sympathy when I think of my colleagues who have lost their lives in connection with this quite wonderful profession. I would also like, on this note, to express my sincere sympathy to their families and loved ones.

What would be the right course of action at a time like this? To call for an immediate, thorough investigation carried out by the relevant state agencies. I would like this Parliament to have the confidence and moral authority to do this. However, I am afraid this is not the case. Why? Because such demands are only made of states outside the European Union. However, things are different when it comes to human rights being grossly violated in a European Union Member State, as happened in my country, Hungary, where people were shot in the eye at a mass gathering of several thousand people staged by the party of the man currently presiding this session, Vice-President Pál Schmitt, to commemorate the anniversary of the 1956 revolution and fight for freedom. This Parliament has not had any investigation conducted into this case and the crisis situation which has continued since then.

I am afraid that as long as this does not happen and as long as someone who was a member of the government which sanctioned shooting at people can be Vice-Chairwoman of Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties,

Justice and Home Affairs, we cannot have any real confidence and the moral authority in another country, to ask for this kind of investigation to be carried out in a country outside the European Union. I would therefore ask you to propose and demand an immediate investigation into human rights violations in Hungary. Thank you.

**Cristian Dan Preda (PPE).** – (RO) I wanted to say, first of all, that I am disappointed that, when the dairy crisis was being discussed, the chamber was full, and now, when human rights are being discussed, I do not think that there are any more than 40 of us left in the chamber. It is a pity that this is how things are. I am not saying that the dairy crisis is not important, but a problem such as human rights is of paramount political importance to each one of us.

I would also like to say that I find unacceptable the whole idea that this year when, as is well known, many countries in Central and Eastern Europe are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the collapse of Communism, a power right on our doorstep, which was the originator of these Communist regimes, demonstrates such indifference to crimes perpetrated against human rights activists. I believe that the break with totalitarianism must be clearly affirmed by every one of us.

**Meglena Kuneva, Member of the Commission.** – Mr President, today's debate on the situation of human rights defenders in Russia is timely and very appropriate. The recent wave of violence against human rights defenders has put the spotlight on the grave dangers they run in the course of their work. Many have paid the ultimate price for bringing to light violations of human rights. We pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives and to those who continue their work in such an environment.

Much of the violence against human rights defenders has taken place in the North Caucasus, against the background of growing instability. The Commission knows many of them. They are highly respected partners in the implementation of human rights projects. Innocent civilians, law enforcement personnel and government officials have lost their lives in the ongoing struggle in the region.

Violence against human rights defenders is not restricted to the North Caucasus. There are reports of activists, lawyers and independent journalists across the Russian Federation facing violence, harassment and intimidation. The EU must continue to speak out against this violence and insist that Russia uphold the commitments it has entered into as a member of the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

It is crucial that the attacks and violent deaths of civil society activists are properly investigated and that the perpetrators are promptly identified and punished. It is only through the effective and lawful prosecution of these killings that the climate of fear and impunity can be dissipated.

President Medvedev has spoken out against what he has termed the 'legal nihilism' prevailing in Russia. The EU stands ready to support Russia in its continuing reform of the judicial system. The EU highly values the opportunity it has to discuss its concerns on human rights with the Russian authorities. We welcome the more open attitude President Medvedev has taken to discussions with the EU on these issues.

The next EU-Russia summit is another opportunity to continue these discussions. This must be complemented by exchanges among experts. The regular EU-Russia human rights consultations offer an opportunity to broaden the scope of these discussions and the range of interlocutors with whom we discuss human rights issues.

The safety of human rights defenders must be the first concern. We urge the Russian authorities to make every possible effort to ensure that those who work on shedding light on violations of human rights are able to do so without fear of violence or intimidation.

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

The vote will take place at the end of the debate.

## 9.2. Kazakhstan: the case of Yevgeny Zhovtis

**President.** – I have received five motions for<sup>(4)</sup> a resolution concerning Kazakhstan: the Yevgeny Zhovtis case (Rule 122).

<sup>(4)</sup> See Minutes.

**Heidi Hautala, author.** – (FI) Mr President, I would like to make a final comment on the debate we have just had and say that, as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, I recently sent a letter to the Conference of Committee Chairs, asking it to consider bringing these discussions forward, so that Parliament may be fully attended and also so that the Council can have a more prominent role here in the discussion. I hope that my fellow Members in the various groups will discuss this matter with their groups' chairmen, as Parliament's authority is continually being gnawed away at because there are so few of us here at any one time.

Now let us turn to the Zhovtis case. Kazakhstan is an important Central Asian country, and it will assume the Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe next year. It is therefore not a matter of indifference how crimes are judged in a country that will be at the head of the democratic aspirations of all countries over a vast area of Europe. Accordingly, we should focus attention on the case of human rights defender Yevgeny Zhovtis. He was found guilty of manslaughter in very suspicious circumstances and sentenced to four years in an open prison for running over a pedestrian in July this year.

We have to take into account the fact that the OSCE has been wondering whether the procedure to which Zhovtis was subjected was possibly in violation of the principle of a fair trial, which is guaranteed in Kazakhstan's constitution. The European Parliament also needs to keep this debate going with the Council and the Commission, so that they might raise the issue of this case and demand a fair trial.

Mr President, the European Parliament can have a powerful influence on the extent to which the countries of Central Asia endorse the principle of the rule of law by keeping a record of these individual cases, and the case of Yevgeny Zhovtis is without a doubt one of these.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis, author.** – (LT) As the time approaches when it will chair the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, sadly Kazakhstan is distancing itself from commitments on alignment with European standards. Unjustifiably underlining its unique and special nature, the country shows no regard for the OSCE's recommendations on electoral laws and freedom of the press. Repeated violations of human rights and the direct persecution of human rights defenders increasingly raise doubts as to whether this state is suitable to head an organisation which fights for the implementation of democratic principles. We urge Astana to make concrete progress in the areas of democratisation, the protection of human rights, the rule of law and freedom of the press. Kazakh laws which are based on international law must be applied appropriately and transparently in legal proceedings against the human rights activists Yevgeny Zhovtis, Yesingepov and Dubanov. We must hope and demand that judgments are impartial and that the prisoners' involvement in the human rights movement does not influence the verdict. We urge the Council to raise the matter of these human rights defenders' cases at the next EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue Meeting in October. We call on the European Commission to offer intensive assistance to Kazakhstan as it prepares to chair the OSCE, to ensure that this important international organisation is not compromised.

**Renate Weber, author.** – Mr President, first of all I would like to express my sympathy to the family of the victims of the car accident in which Mr Yevgeny Zhovtis was involved. A human tragedy which unfortunately occurred where a man lost his life. At the same time, please allow me to express my concern in relation to the current situation of Mr Yevgeny Zhovtis.

Indisputably every person who commits a criminal offence must accept that legal sanctions will be applied indiscriminatingly and Mr Zhovtis, as an outstanding human rights lawyer, knows this better than anybody. But at the same time we want to make sure that the Kazakh authorities do not use this unfortunate situation to punish Mr Zhovtis for anything else other than the car accident in which he was involved. Mr Zhovtis must not be punished for his human rights activity and for being a very critical voice of the Kazakh Government.

Therefore, I think it is of the utmost importance that the Kazakh judicial authorities carry out immediately, and with full respect for transparency and the rule of law, a second full and fair investigation into the circumstances related to the incident and to a review of Mr Zhovtis' conviction and sentence.

**Elisabeth Jeggle, author.** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start by saying that my group was somewhat surprised to see the judicial evaluation of a dramatic car accident on the agenda as an urgent resolution on human rights issues.

For the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) it is therefore important to establish that we do not in principle wish to question the judgments made by an independent court, unless we are talking about an obvious show trial that does not comply with any principles of law. We have already seen

this in Iran. There must be a clear line drawn here. As far as we are concerned, an independent judicial system is the key element of any democratic order. That being the case, we must first take account of the judgment handed down.

We must also acknowledge the fact that a person has been killed in a car accident – and we should be saddened by that, indeed we are saddened by that – but also that a judicial review has been carried out. The fact that Yevgeny Zhovtis, a well-known civil rights activist, is involved in this case has brought it to the attention of the world and has prompted the response, as a result of which we are discussing this here today.

The PPE Group acknowledges Kazakhstan's efforts and progress towards democracy and the rule of law. We would like to assure Kazakhstan of our explicit support and encourage this country to continue resolutely along this path. With regard to this particular case, we urge the Kazakh authorities, in their own interests, to provide the public with as much information as possible and to present their view on these events, and to enable a fair appeal or review procedure to be carried out for Mr Zhovtis under the rule of law.

Kazakhstan is to chair the OSCE. That will be quite a challenge!

**Struan Stevenson, on behalf of the ECR Group.** – Mr President, I have to agree with Mrs Jeggle. I am utterly astonished that, in front of the whole Parliament here in Strasbourg, we are having an urgent debate on a traffic accident in Kazakhstan, albeit an accident where somebody was tragically killed and where the driver of the car happens to a human rights activist who has been duly sentenced in a court of law to four years in prison – but even in a low-security prison, which has suddenly become, in the terms of the resolution, 'a labour camp'. I am afraid that bringing this kind of matter before this House really brings the reputation of this House into disrepute and it means that the good work that we try to do in human rights is devalued, when we start talking about traffic accidents.

Are we seriously suggesting the Kazakh Government threw a civilian under the car wheels of a human rights activist? Are we seriously suggesting that the sentence is too harsh for somebody who was convicted of manslaughter? We cannot go on traducing a country like Kazakhstan, simply because of political motivation, to try and bring down their reputation before they chair the OSCE next year. This is politically motivated, and it is a disgrace that it is on the agenda. I hope the House will throw out these resolutions and support the amendments.

**Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR).** - (PL) Mr President, I have similar doubts to the previous speaker, Mr Stevenson. Kazakhstan is an important country. It is making a lot of effort in terms of its progress towards democracy. Of course, at the moment, it is not a model of democratic freedoms, but the civil rights situation in that country – and I know Kazakhstan a little, as I have visited it on a number of occasions – is considerably better than in most of the neighbouring countries in the region, and it fortunately does not have the sort of problems that exist in Russia, for example, and which we have just been discussing.

I share Mr Stevenson's view that the European Parliament should not use all its authority to state its position on a single, dramatic court case. It may be the case that some clarification is needed in this instance, but certainly not a European Parliament resolution. This would undermine the value of the resolution, and people will stop listening to the voice of the European Parliament if it becomes distracted by issues that do not deserve a general debate or a parliamentary resolution.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE).** - (FI) Mr President, Kazakhstan has an important role to play in Central Asia both economically and in terms of security policy, and the country's cooperation with the European Union has grown. It was pleasing to hear Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Marat Tashin promise last year in anticipation of the Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and again in May this year, improvements to the country's human rights situation. Despite the international attention, however, there has been tighter control of the media and there are poor standards of freedom of religion. In addition, we have heard of several cases of the arbitrary arrest of human rights activists.

The sentence handed down to the human rights activist Yevgeny Zhovtis also makes one wonder, and it is in the Government of Kazakhstan's own interests to lay these doubts to rest in every respect, and that is unquestionably the case in view of its forthcoming term of office chairing the OSCE. We hope for the best and look forward to seeing these matters cleared up.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE).** – (DE) Mr President, first of all I would like to say that I am pleased to see Mrs Hautala back here. However, she has not been here for a few years and during this time we have had the Council on Thursday afternoons. The Czech and the German Presidencies were here on Thursdays. I do not think that

we should move the debate, as we cannot get through everything on Wednesday, so we need to be here and we need to force the Council to be here on Thursday afternoons as well. That is the solution, not condensing the whole agenda into Wednesday.

This is actually a very difficult case. However, precisely because we cannot yet fully trust the Government of Kazakhstan in respect of the rule of law, we must insist that the case is investigated in an objective manner. In this regard, I fully support Mrs Jeggle. We have therefore signed the resolution. This matter must be investigated objectively and nothing must be covered up or glossed over.

**Meglena Kuneva**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, the Commission has noted with concern reports of procedural violations during the trial of Kazakh human rights defender Mr Yevgeny Zhovtis, who has been convicted of manslaughter following a fatal road accident. As you are aware, the Kazakh authorities have rejected claims that the judgment against Mr Zhovtis was politically motivated.

The Commission fully supports the EU Presidency statement on this case at the OSCE Permanent Council of 10 September. Given the seriousness of the alleged flaws in the investigations and the court trial, we call on Kazakhstan, which is the incoming chair of the OSCE, to ensure that the appeal is handled with full respect for national law and international standards. The Commission will continue to follow this case closely.

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

The vote will take place at the end of the debates.

### 9.3. Syria: the case of Muhannad Al Hassani

**President**. – I have received six motions for <sup>(5)</sup> a resolution concerning Syria:

the Muhannad Al Hassani case (Rule 122).

**Franziska Katharina Brantner**, *author*. – Mr President, I would like to present the case of Mr Muhannad Al Hassani. He has been imprisoned because he defends the human rights of his compatriots in Syria.

He played a very important role because he observed all trials before the Supreme State Security Court and made regular evaluations of detention conditions in Syria. He is now himself detained and imprisoned.

With regard to Syria, we ask that it fulfil its obligations and therefore comply with the international covenant on civil and political rights and with the UN Convention against torture, to which Syria is actually a party; that Syria reverse its policy of repression against human rights defenders and their families; and that it release the human rights defenders, prisoners of conscience and peace activists who are in prison.

We also have a request with regard to the EU. With respect to the signature of an association agreement we, the Greens and EFA, have proposed the adoption of a road map prior to the signature of the Association Agreement which would articulate our objectives in terms of improvements to be made in the human rights field.

International law sets a series of obligations that states have to respect, and it is also our responsibility, and in particular of the entire EU, to ensure that respect thereof enters the association agreement as a way to enforce that further.

We will work in that direction. Thank you for your support for the resolution.

**Véronique De Keyser**, *author*. – (FR) Mr President, I admit that I am both confused and also quite sad and disappointed.

I am confused because, undoubtedly, in terms of international relations, Syria has made great progress over the past two years. It has joined the Union for the Mediterranean. It has, on various occasions, acted as a mediator in difficult international situations, including very recently when a young French woman was arrested in Iran. I would say that the fact that the association agreement – which is not yet signed, Mrs Brantner, but which could be fairly soon – the fact that this association agreement has been relaunched is, at the same time, a very positive sign.

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<sup>(5)</sup> See Minutes.

On the domestic front, it is true that there are also some very positive developments in Syria. Syrians have taken in 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, and they are looking after them, they have a high level of education, and they have freedom of religion, which is important. However, in terms of political freedom and political plurality, there has been absolutely no progress. To my enormous regret, we continue to see instances of repression and imprisonment of human rights activists and defenders, and we have intervened on several occasions over the last few years to request the release of political prisoners.

On two occasions, we have succeeded in obtaining a release. Syrian prisons still contain, however, people such as Dr Al Labwani, Dr Al Bunni and, now, Mr Al Hassani. I would therefore like to address a message to Syria: we are here and we would like to help Syria to escape the isolation in which it has been placed at some point.

We think that it is an important figure on the international stage, and particularly for peace in the Middle East. Please, though, for your own image – and I think that you are strong enough to allow political plurality and human rights defenders in your country – please, release the political prisoners, and, as we have said, please abide by the convention against torture and degrading treatment!

This is in Syria's own interests and in the interests of peace throughout the world, and particularly of peace in the Middle East.

**Renate Weber, author.** – Mr President, Muhannad Al Hassani is another human rights defender arbitrarily detained by the Syrian authorities. He is another Syrian political prisoner whose only guilt was his wish to protect the right of the people to freely express themselves, their right to engage in political activities and their right to a fair trial.

For more than five years he was forbidden to travel. His office telephone communications and e-mails were under constant surveillance by Syrian security forces. After weeks of increasing harassment over his role in monitoring the practices of Syria's Supreme State Security Court, he was in the end arrested by the Syrian state security and later charged with several criminal offences, all referring to his right to free speech.

On the topic of arbitrary detention, let us not forget Mr al-Labwani, the outstanding human rights defender, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison for what the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considered to be 'the peaceful expression of his political views'.

The Syrian Government must free Mr Al Hassani, Mr al-Labwani and the other political prisoners immediately and unconditionally and guarantee their physical and psychological integrity in all circumstances. The Syrian authorities must put an end to all forms of harassment against Syrian human rights defenders and civil society activists, in accordance with the provisions of the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

**Charles Tannock, author.** – Mr President, Syria is an important country in the Middle East and has a vital role to play in reducing the ability of Iran to support terrorist actions, via its proxies Hezbollah and Hamas, against Israel. Syria also has a habit of fomenting unrest in Lebanon, which Syria still regards as barely sovereign and within its sphere of influence.

Syria is also a secular regime. In fact, it remains the only vestige now of the once powerful Ba'athist Party which ruled Iraq as well, so things like women's rights are advanced. However, overall it remains a brutal one-party dictatorship.

The detention of Muhannad Al Hassani as a leading human rights defender is alarming. If Syria really wants us to support an EU association agreement, it should please release Mr Al Hassani immediately and end the persecution of human rights defenders such as Mr Al Hassani.

**Eija-Riitta Korhola, author.** – (FI) Mr President, I am pleased that we have had the courage to put the spotlight on the human rights situation in Syria at this point in time. The finishing touches are being put to an EU-Syria association agreement within the framework of Mediterranean cooperation, and because one of the fundamental pillars of cooperation consists specifically of the promotion of human rights and democracy, I think that the EU should call more loudly for improvements in this area.

It is not enough just to focus cooperation on improving the economic situation. As we have heard, the leading Syrian human rights lawyer, Muhannad Al Hassani, was imprisoned at the end of July without any proper trial. He was charged with weakening national sentiments and spreading false news. The case is not the first of its kind. We in Parliament last intervened in a similar one in 2007. Kamal Abwani, whose cause



we were pleading then, is still in jail, although in March the UN investigation team reached the conclusion that it had been an arbitrary arrest.

Syria has a very long way to go when it comes to freedom of speech and of association. The work of NGOs in the country is problematic and thus virtually nonexistent. It will be highly regrettable if we in the EU do not have the courage to set clear criteria for a basis for cooperation with Syria. In my opinion, the onus is very much on us to demand the release of political prisoners and compliance with international human rights agreements before we can move on with the EU-Syria association agreement.

Human rights in the world are not just a lot of solitary islands: they are a fabric, in which everything has an impact on everything else, and if we tolerate neglect and turn a blind eye, that will eat away at our own rights here before very long. It is our important duty to nurture them and ensure that they are implemented always and everywhere. Only in that way can we make human life worthwhile.

**Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg**, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (PL) In July, Mr Muhannad Al Hassani, one of the most prominent Syrian human rights activists, was arrested. During a trial held behind closed doors, to which lawyers were not granted access, he was accused of weakening national sentiments and disseminating false information. He had previously already been interrogated on a number of occasions in connection with his activities in the field of human rights and efforts to defend people arrested for political reasons. He was also denied the right to leave the country. Mr Muhannad Al Hassani took part in monitoring the Supreme Court's proceedings as, in the view of Human Rights Watch, the conditions under which these proceedings take place do not meet international standards.

We are concerned that human rights activists are being repressed in Syria, especially in view of the lack of progress the Syrian authorities are making in the field of human rights. We need to insist that Syria respects the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In view of existing political, economic and cultural ties between Syria and the European Union, and the significant role that this country has in terms of fostering stability in the Middle East, I am sure that Syria can make progress in this field, thereby also contributing to the democratisation of the whole region.

**Franz Obermayr (NI)**. – (DE) Mr President, this motion for a resolution is essentially absolutely right, as it is, of course, our duty, particularly in view of the planned association agreement, to state our views clearly, including with regard to the protection of the family, relatives and fellow fighters of Muhannad Al Hassani and also to insist on the demands of Article 2 of the agreement, not least because we Europeans know from the painful experiences of our past what it means for human rights to be trampled underfoot. It was only two decades ago that a communist terrorist regime collapsed in central and south-eastern Europe.

In this regard, however, I would warn against turning a blind eye if in Turkey, which is in the same area as Syria, human rights are not respected in the way they should be. This is even more important given that Turkey is a candidate for accession to the EU with significant shortcomings in the areas of the administration of justice, the penal system, the protection of minorities and religious freedom, even if a biased report from an allegedly independent Commission or the Ahtisaari report give a different impression.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE)**. – (DE) Mr President, I believe that we should, of course, be very critical of the human rights situation in Syria. It is a dictatorship and a police state. Mr Al Hassani must be released.

However, we must also take note of the fact that President Assad – who is becoming more open and opening up his country – and also his father, as Alevites, have, for example, supported the coexistence of Muslims and Christians in such a way that a leading Syrian Christian, Cardinal Daud, told me that Christians in Syria feel safer than they do in Iraq, which is protected by Western troops.

We should therefore be discriminating in our dealings with Syria, denounce the violations of human rights and not give in and stop supporting the country along its path towards rapprochement and openness. Of course we should be critical, but we should also acknowledge that there are the beginnings of something here that we should encourage.

**Meglana Kuneva**, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, the Commission shares the concerns of the European Parliament with regard to the human rights situation in Syria. Our assessment is that the situation has deteriorated over recent months, with more arbitrary detentions, harassment of human rights defenders and travel bans.

The arrest on 28 August of Mr Muhannad Al Hassani – a well known lawyer, President of the National Organisation for Human Rights in Syria and a member of the Damascus Bar Association for 15 years – is the most recent example. Mr Al Hassani is a human rights defender and one might suspect that his arrest is politically motivated.

The EU has already expressed its concerns to the Syrian authorities. Syria must observe its international commitments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Syria is a state party. The Commission, through its delegation in Damascus, together with Member States' embassies, are discussing how to more effectively and efficiently act in defence of human rights' defenders. Clearly, we have to continue calling for actions to protect human rights defenders and to ensure the observation of trials at the Supreme State Security Court. We must continue to support the civil society through our instruments, such as the non-state actors and the European instrument for democracy and human rights budget lines, and give moral support to the families.

Despite being important, these actions are, nevertheless, insufficient. We believe the EU would have a stronger leverage on Syria if the association agreement was signed. I am glad that the Presidency is contemplating its signature in the coming weeks. With this agreement we will establish a regular dialogue to advise on these issues and achieve better results.

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

The vote will take place at the end of the debates.

## **10. Voting time**

**President.** – The next item is the vote.

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

### **10.1. Murder of human rights activists in Russia (vote)**

*– After the vote.*

**Zuzana Roithová (PPE).** – (CS) I am very sorry, Mr President, I would just like it to go on record that I voted from another seat by mistake - my seat is 107 and I voted from 67, in other words with another Member's card. That apart, I am in favour. I simply sat by mistake in the seat of another Member who has an inserted card and I voted from his card, which is against our rules of procedure, so please could it go on record that I am in favour of the motion and that the vote of my fellow Member is invalid.

**President.** – Thank you. That will be noted in the minutes.

### **10.2. Kazakhstan: the case of Yevgeny Zhovtis (vote)**

### **10.3. Syria: the case of Muhannad Al Hassani (vote)**

## **11. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes**

## **12. Composition of committees and delegations : see Minutes**

## **13. Decisions concerning certain documents: see Minutes**

## **14. Transfers of appropriations: see Minutes**

## **15. Documents received: see Minutes**

## **16. Forwarding of texts adopted during the sitting: see Minutes**

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**17. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes****18. Adjournment of the session**

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

*(The sitting was closed at 16.45)*

## ANNEX (Written answers)

### QUESTIONS TO THE COUNCIL (The Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union bears sole responsibility for these answers)

#### Question no 10 by Pat the Cope Gallagher(H-0282/09)

##### Subject: Fostering peace in the Middle East

Can the European Council make a statement as to the initiatives that it is pursuing to foster peace and reconciliation between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples?

##### Answer

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

As stated in the Presidency conclusions of the June 2009 European Council meeting, the Middle East Peace Process remains a top priority for the European Union in 2009. The same meeting also endorsed the conclusions adopted by the External Relations Council at its meeting on 15 June 2009.

The Council remains committed to a two-state solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state, comprising the West Bank and Gaza, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. This is an indispensable step towards a more stable and peaceful Middle East.

We very much welcome to US Administrator's commitment to vigorously pursue a two-state solution and we are ready to work actively with the United States and other Quartet members to achieve this goal.

The EU is also ready to continue substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements, including through regional arrangements such as the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean. We stand ready in particular to further develop our relations with the Palestinian Authority within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. We will help promote Palestinian state-building and will cooperate further towards additional improvements in restoring law and order. Our focus will continue to be on support in the areas of civil police and justice.

A comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a regional approach, covering the political, security and economic dimensions. Through its numerous agreements with partners in the region, the EU is uniquely placed to work on key issues of regional development. In the light of developments on the ground, we will carefully assess how our policies and programmes can promote concrete and early results on the path of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

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#### Question no 11 by Georgios Toussas(H-0284/09)

##### Subject: Continuation of the criminal policy against the people of Palestine

Israel's recent barbaric war against the Palestinian people, the expansion of settlements, the dividing 'Wall of Shame' in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the continued murderous blockade of the Gaza Strip are worsening the already unbearable situation of the Palestinian people even further. With their 'New Middle East Policy', both the EU and the US are providing cover for Israeli brutality. It is unacceptable that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) should figure on the list of named 'terrorist organisations', with false and unfounded allegations, simply because it is fighting for the rights of the Palestinian people.

Does the Council condemn the dividing wall of shame, the Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories and the continued blockade of the Gaza Strip? Does it recognise the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to create an independent, united Palestinian state on 1967 territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with sovereignty within its territory and borders? Will it remove the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine from the list of named terrorist organisations, and will it abolish the list in its entirety?

**Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

In response to the question of the Honourable member of the European Parliament the Council would like to recall its formal statements that while recognising Israel's right to protect its citizens, the construction of the barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory is contrary to international law.

The Council has also urged the government of Israel to immediately end settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001. It reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. Also according to the Road Map, Israel has an obligation to freeze all settlement activity, including the natural growth of existing settlements, and dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.

The Council has also expressed its concern for the situation in Gaza and has repeatedly called for the immediate and unconditional access for humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza without which the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery will not be possible.

The Council would also like to assure the Honourable member of the European Parliament of its unflinching commitment to the two-state solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. The EU will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties. Indeed a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is one of the central objectives of the European Union's common foreign and security policy.

The listing of terrorist organisations is one of a number of measures adopted by the European Union in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1373 of 2001 as part of a wide-ranging international strategy to combat terrorism and in particular the financing of terrorism.

The inclusion of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is based on objective criteria. As within all persons, groups, and entities on the list, the PFLP is made aware of the reasons for its inclusion.

The Council reviews the list regularly and at least every six months. At the last review the Council considered that the grounds for listing the PFLP remained valid and therefore decided to maintain the group on the list which was adopted on 15 June.

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**Question no 12 by Jim Higgins(H-0286/09)****Subject: Concerns about Iran/Iraq**

Is the Council concerned at the fact that the Iraqi police force has entered Camp Ashraf and that a number of refugees have been killed and many injured, that 36 detainees are currently under arrest and on hunger strike, and that the Iraqi authorities have ignored court orders for their release, and does the Council consider that the recent election in Iran was conducted in a transparent and democratic manner? Does the Council believe that there should be fresh elections which would be jointly monitored by the United Nations and the European Union and, in the event of a refusal to hold such an election, should sanctions be imposed?

**Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Council follows developments in Iraq very closely and use every opportunity to underline the importance of respect for human rights in our contacts with Iraqi authorities.

The Council has discussed the recent events regarding the Iranian Presidential election and noted the result as announced by the Iranian Electoral Commission and also the concerns regarding the conduct of the

elections expressed by several candidates. This is a matter that the Iranian authorities must address and investigate.

The Council has expressed serious concern about the violence on the streets and the excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators. It is essential that the aspirations of the Iranian people are achieved through peaceful means and that freedom of expression is respected.

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**Question no 13 by Athanasios Pafilis(H-0287/09)**

**Subject: Criminalisation of communist ideology in Lithuania**

On 9 June, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted amendments to the Penal Code providing for a sentence of up to three years' imprisonment for 'spreading propaganda about, denying or justifying the genocide carried out by communism and fascism' and 'publicly slandering members of the movement for the freedom of Lithuania who fought against the Soviet occupation between 1944 and 1953'. These provisions are an attempt, by way of penal measures, to falsify history and to equate communism with fascism. They require the recognition of the fascist collaborators of the Nazis, who were responsible for crimes against humanity. They criminalise communist ideology and prohibit and punish freedom of speech and a different view of history.

What is the Council's position on the rehabilitation - in particular through the imposition of penal measures against dissenters - of fascism and nazism, the banning of freedom of speech and the criminalisation of communist ideology in a number of EU Member States, particularly the Baltic States, where the Communist Party is banned and its members and other anti-fascist democrats are persecuted?

**Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

As regards the piece of legislation mentioned by the Honourable Member, the Council has not taken a position. Neither does any legal instrument adopted by the Council address the issue raised, as it falls within the domestic jurisdiction of Member States.

In this context, however, I would like to mention the first the first Remembrance Day for victims of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, which I had the honour to attend on 23 August this year. This commemoration was held across Europe following an initiative by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, to pay tribute to the millions of people who have died in the name of Nazism and Communism.

The Remembrance Day also serves as an excellent moment to honour all the brave people who still risk their lives in the struggle against dictatorship and oppression, for freedom and democracy, in our close neighbourhood and in other parts of the world.

Human rights, democracy and rule of law are values that are fundamental to the European Union and its Member States. In this context, I should also like to mention the impressive work carried out by the European Parliament in supporting democracy movements and human rights defenders in totalitarian countries worldwide.

Considering the Union's commitment to our shared values, it goes without saying that any legislation adopted by Member States is expected to be in conformity with both Union and Community primary and secondary law, as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

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**Question no 14 by Tadeusz Zwiefka(H-0290/09)**

**Subject: Outcome of 2nd EU-Egypt subcommittee meeting on 'Political Matters: Human Rights and Democracy - International and Regional Issues' on 7-8 July 2009 concerning 'Al-Manar TV'**

The broadcasting of the outlawed terrorist channel 'Al-Manar TV' to Europe by the Egyptian satellite provider Nilesat continues to be in direct violation of the EU-Egypt Action Plan and constitutes a radicalisation threat

to European security. In the Commission's reply to Question H-0011/09 it was stated that the subcommittee on political matters with Egypt is the 'appropriate mechanism' for raising the broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' by Nilesat. Did the Council put the issue of Nilesat's broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' on the agenda of the 2nd EU-Egypt subcommittee meeting on 'Political Matters: Human Rights and Democracy – International and Regional Issues' on 7-8 July 2009? Could the Council outline what commitments Egypt gave in order to stop the broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' on Nilesat?

### Answer

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

I am grateful to the Honourable Member for his question about the Egyptian satellite provider Nilesat, whose broadcasts of the Lebanese "Al-Manar TV" can reach the territory of the European Union. The Council understands the concern of the honourable Member that some of the material broadcast by the station could amount to incitement to hatred.

In order to achieve a lasting improvement in matters of xenophobia, intolerance, and sectarian hatred there is no better method than dialogue. It is encouraging to see, therefore, that more than 80 countries, among them Egypt, Lebanon, Gulf states and most EU member states, have joined the UN Alliance of Civilizations, whose main mission is to prevent conflicts due to prejudice and cultural or religious misconceptions. Several UN AoC programmes focus on media literacy and ethics.

Thus, the Council, considers that dialogue with Egypt is the most effective way to encourage the Egyptian government to progress in the area of human rights. This dialogue takes place through the institutional structure of sub-committees and political dialogue, and provides an opportunity for exchanges of views on a variety of issues.

The Council had already addressed the specific concerns raised by the Honourable Member in its statement related to the 5th EU-Egypt association Council, which stated that "The EU encourages Egypt to continue to pursue efforts aimed at fighting discrimination on all grounds and at promoting tolerance in matters related to culture, religion and beliefs and minorities. In this context, the EU is concerned about the discriminatory content in some of the broadcasts of the Al-Manar television channel distributed by the Egyptian satellite Nilesat. The EU condemns any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence".

At the sub-committee on political matters with Egypt, whose second meeting took place in Cairo on 7 and 8 July 2009, the issue of the broadcasting of "Al-Manar TV" was raised for the EU side within the framework of issues related to the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, including the undertaking in the joint EU-Egypt Action Plan to "strengthen the role of media in combating xenophobia and discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or culture" and encouraging the media "to assume its responsibilities in this regard.

Egypt refrained from providing a reply, on the grounds that Al-Manar was an individual case. Egypt also failed to offer a commitment to address the case. The reaction of Egypt should however not prevent us from continuing the dialogue. The Honourable Member can be assured that the Council will continue to pay close attention to this issue and is ready to raise it on another occasion within the EU's regular political dialogue with Egypt.

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### Question no 15 by Ryszard Czarnecki(H-0292/09)

#### Subject: Situation in Pakistan

Officially, a civilian government is currently in power in Pakistan. Does the Council believe that the civilian government is in full control of the situation in the country or does it also think that, as in the past, real power lies with the Pakistani army?

**Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The general elections in February 2008 brought democracy back to Pakistan. The Council recognises this as a major progress for Pakistan. Strengthening democracy and stability remains the EU's main objective in its cooperation with Pakistan.

Needless to say, it is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy in Pakistan that the civilian government has control of the armed forces. Elected governments should always exercise full transparency and control over the military establishment. This is a fundament of EU policy.

The process of democratization in Pakistan is still at an early stage. The EU, together with the rest of the international community, must continue to support the government in its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and structures. The first EU-Pakistan Summit, held on 17 June 2009, was an important step in building a stronger partnership between the EU and Pakistan in supporting democratic, civilian rule in Pakistan. The EU will use its strategic dialogue with Pakistan to further promote this objective.

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**Question no 16 by Hans-Peter Martin(H-0295/09)****Subject: Action by the Swedish Presidency to enhance transparency**

The Council Decision of 15 September 2006 adopting the Council's Rules of Procedure (OJ L285 of 16 October 2006, p. 47) cited the European Council's call for citizens to be enabled 'to acquire first-hand insight' into the European Union's activities, 'notably through further increasing openness and transparency' and 'particularly when the Council deliberates on legislative acts under the codecision procedure'.

Yet it appears from the agendas of Council meetings that the number of agenda items discussed in public actually declined, between 2007 and 2008, in all Council of Ministers meetings (except in the case of the Education, Youth and Culture Council and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council). In 2008, for example, the Environment Council discussed only 4 out of 33 agenda items in public, significantly fewer than in 2007. The all-important General Affairs and External Relations Council, meanwhile, discussed only one of the 130 items on its agendas in public.

In what areas does the Swedish Presidency intend to take tangible measures to finally comply with the Council Decision of 15 September and maintain the celebrated Swedish tradition of transparency?

Is the Swedish Presidency also in favour of at last publishing the proceedings of meetings of the European Council, including the Council's customary 'working lunches'?

What tangible measures will the Swedish Presidency take to ensure items on the agenda of Council meetings are discussed in public?

**Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Presidency would like to recall that the modification of Article 8 of the Council's Rules of Procedure, to which reference is made in the Honourable Member's question, has brought about a significant increase in the number of public deliberations and public debates during the last three years as compared to the previous four years period where the access to the decision-making process of the Council was governed by the principles established by the Seville European Council (the so-called "Seville regime").

Thus, a total of 788 topics have been dealt with at ministerial level during open Council sessions since 1 July 2006. The increase has been particularly significant as regards the number of legislative "B" items: Altogether the number of the legislative "B" items examined by the Council since 1 July 2006 in public doubled in comparison with the period July 2002 - June 2006. Moreover, a total of 128 public debates, including 118



debates on important issues affecting the interests of the European Union and its citizens, were held during the period July 2006 - June 2009, whereas only 33 such debates took place during the preceding period.

That being said, the Presidency would like to recall that the number of items listed on the Council's agenda for a public deliberation or a public debate may vary from one year to another, notably depending on the number of co-decision items to be examined and/or adopted by the Council during a given year.

Thus a total of 153 co-decision items were listed on the Council's agenda for a public deliberation in 2007, whereas the corresponding figure for 2008 was 229 co-decision. In 2009, the Council has so far dealt with 148 co-decision items in public.

The number of public debates held pursuant to Article 8 (3) of the Council's Rules of Procedure may also vary, depending on how many issues which have been identified by each Presidency as suited for a public debate.

With regard to the proceedings of the European Council, it should be recalled that the transparency rules are not applicable to the European Council.

The Swedish Presidency shares the Honourable Member's view on the importance of increased transparency in the work of the Union. This is a very important part of the work to increase citizens' confidence in the EU and our common institutions.

For its part, the Presidency intends to give full effect to the relevant transparency provisions, set out in Article 8 paragraphs 1 - 4, of the Council's Rules of Procedure. In principle, all deliberations on

legislative acts to be adopted in accordance with the codecision procedure will be open to the public, as provided in the Council's Rules of Procedure.

Parallel to this, the Council will continue the efforts undertaken since July 2006 with a view to further improve the quality of the web casting of the public Council sessions. This service, which is regularly updated and enhanced, offers live and on-demand access to public debates and deliberations, as well as other public events.

In qualitative terms, the Council's video streaming aims to ensure that users have easy and meaningful access to the debates they are interested in.

Moreover, since the creation of the EBS (Europe by Satellite) Plus by the end of 2008, more space is now available for re-transmission of the public deliberations and debates of the Council.

The Lisbon Treaty places increased focus on openness and transparency, which hopefully will contribute to both Council and other institutions taking steps forward in their work for more transparency. Moreover, if and when the Lisbon Treaty enters into force, the Council will systematically meet in public when considering a draft legislative act and when voting on such a draft, irrespective of the legislative procedure applicable.

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#### **Question no 17 by Czesław Adam Siekierski(H-0298/09)**

##### **Subject: Food distribution programme for the Community's neediest citizens**

In March this year, the European Parliament adopted a report on special support for the Community's neediest citizens, which provided for a free food distribution programme. I believed that Parliament's adoption of that report by a large majority would convince the Czech Presidency to resume discussions and find a reasonable compromise within the Council. Unfortunately my hopes proved ill-founded. I am concerned that Sweden, currently presiding over the Council, has made no mention of resuming work on the project, despite the fact that there is nothing standing in its way. Does the Council intend to resume discussions on this programme, which is of such importance to millions of our citizens?

#### **Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Since 1987, Community legislation has allowed food from intervention stocks to be supplied to charities for distribution to the most deprived people in the Community.

In 2008 the Commission made a proposal to review the legislation, made necessary by the rise in certain food prices and the decrease in stocks.

Under the French Presidency, the Council held a policy debate on this proposal, but it was not possible to secure qualified majority in favour of the proposal.

A number of delegations rejected the very principle of the aid scheme, which they insisted was a matter for individual Member States.

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#### **Question no 18 by Silvia-Adriana Ţicău(H-0300/09)**

##### **Subject: Promotion of an energy-efficient economy**

The Swedish EU Council Presidency has stated that its priorities for the period July to December 2009 include economic recovery, an increase in employment and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which are issues that impact in practice on the lives of all Europeans.

An increase in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies can generate several million jobs in the years to come, laying the foundations for durable economic growth and simultaneously giving the European Union a competitive edge. In view of this, can the EU Council Presidency state what concrete measures it has in mind to encourage EU Member States to develop measures that stimulate investment in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies, which are areas that can generate jobs, promote innovation and ensure durable economic development?

##### **Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Energy efficiency was already identified as a priority for European energy policy in the Energy Policy Action Plan which the European Council adopted in March 2007 and where the objective of 20% energy savings by 2020 was set.

The 18-month Programme of the Council adopted in June 2008 underlines that the Presidencies will, respecting the Member States' choice of energy mix, strive for a low-carbon economy that is consistent with both sustainability and cost efficiency and that positively contributes to broader growth objectives consistent with the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Indeed, energy efficiency does not only have a positive impact on the use of energy resources and on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, but stimulates at the same time, as the honourable MEP states, innovative technological developments and can thus boost the competitiveness of European industry and job creation. Energy efficiency is therefore the corner stone of not only an energy-efficient but also of an eco-efficient economy. It will help us address simultaneously the challenges of climate change, resource degradation, the global economic crisis and security of supply.

Three co-decision legislative proposals linked to energy efficiency are currently tabled before the Council and the European Parliament:

the proposed Directive concerning the energy efficiency of buildings;

the proposed Directive concerning the labelling of energy consumption, and

the proposed Regulation on the fuel efficiency of tyres

and are indeed the main priorities for the Council in this semester.

Once adopted - what we hope will happen, with your help, still during this semester -, Member States will be able to introduce on their basis, also in the longer term, concrete energy efficiency measures in the buildings and construction sector as well as in the wide field of energy related products, both in the public and the private sector. In this sense, such measures will boost investments in innovative technologies which Member States can support with various types of incentives, both national and European.

Implementation of energy efficiency instruments already adopted at Community level will also trigger the creation of new jobs. This is the case for the Eco-design and the energy labelling framework Directives, where important implementing measures (related to lighting, electric motors, etc.) are in the pipeline.

This is also the case for renewable energies, where Council and Parliament adopted the

Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources on 4 May 2009.

As for incentives, Community instruments are available for financing energy efficiency projects, such as the European Parliament and Council Regulation 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund, which was revised in order to allocate € 8 bn to energy-efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing. Within the context of the European Economic Recovery Plan, where emphasis is on "smart investments" through detailed proposals for partnerships between the public and private sectors, Community, EIB and national funding will be used. In this perspective, the European Council gave its support to an increased intervention by the EIB, notably for small and medium-sized enterprises, for renewable energy and for clean transport, as well as the simplification of procedures and a faster implementation of programmes financed by the Cohesion Fund, the Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development with a view to strengthening in particular investment in energy efficiency.

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### **Question no 19 by Kinga Gál(H-0302/09)**

#### **Subject: Free movement of an official representative of a Member State**

The European Union has established an area for the free movement of citizens.

Does the Council believe that - on any grounds - any official representative - i.e. Head of State - of any Member State may be refused entry into the territory of another Member State?

Does the Council accept the point of view that the refusal to allow any official representative of a Member State - i.e. Head of State - to enter the territory of another Member State on the basis of the Directive on the Free Movement of EU citizens, or on any other legal grounds, is seriously at odds with European values?

#### **Answer**

(EN) The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the September 2009 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

As the Honourable Member rightly asserts, free movement of persons is a basic component of the internal market and of the Union as an area of freedom, security and justice. It constitutes a right of all EU citizens, enshrined by Article 18 (1) of the EC Treaty, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by measures adopted to give it effect.

It follows from the EC Treaty and Article 27 of Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States<sup>(6)</sup> that any limitations to this right can only be justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. The application of any such limitation is subject to the control of the Court of Justice.

With regard to the specific point raised by the Honourable Member regarding the movement of Heads of State, the travel arrangements for such individuals, in view of the specific security and safety measures required, would be a matter exclusively for the Member States concerned. It is consequently not for the Council to take a view. This issue has never been discussed by the Council.

However, the Presidency welcomes the bilateral meeting between the Prime Ministers of Hungary and Slovakia held on 10 September, and considers the common statement that was published in connection to the meeting, as a positive sign. This statement seems to provide a good basis for a solution that will subvert the bilateral tensions between the two countries.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ L 158, 30.4.2004, p.77

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## QUESTIONS TO THE COMMISSION

### Question no 30 by Pat the Cope Gallagher(H-0283/09)

#### Subject: Promoting cleaner technology

What initiatives is the EU pursuing at present to promote a greater use of newer and cleaner technologies so that the European Union's climate change targets will be reached?

#### Answer

(EN) A number of policy initiatives are promoting the development and wider use of cleaner technologies. They include:

the Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP) has been implemented since 2004, with actions ranging from focussing Research and Development (R&D) programmes, establishing Technology Platforms, mobilising financial instruments and public procurement, up to revising State Aid guidelines. A Green Paper on the future of ETAP will be proposed before the end of 2009;

the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan), adopted in 2007 as part of the EU Climate Change and Energy package, is targeted at accelerating the development and market take-up of low-carbon technologies. The tools are European Industrial Initiatives in technologies such as renewables and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), the European Energy Research Alliance and enhanced international cooperation;

the Lead Market Initiative, also adopted in 2007, aims at enlarging the market for innovative products and services in six priority areas including sustainable construction, renewable energy and recycling, with demand-side actions related to regulations, public procurement and standardisation;

the Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan (SCP-SIP), adopted in 2008, intends also to promote eco-innovation to develop greener products and leaner production processes. The voluntary targets on Green Public Procurement (50% by 2010) will contribute to an increased uptake of environmental technologies and expansion of eco-industries.

These policy initiatives are also supported by Community funding instruments, such as the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework-Programme for R&D, the new Competitiveness and Innovation Programme and the Cohesion Policy Funds.

It is estimated that about one third of the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme's budget supports research projects on clean or environmental technologies in all sectors. Those investments are also promoting the engagement of the private sector, through dedicated Joint Technology Initiatives or other forms of Public-Private Partnerships.

The revised Community framework on State Aids makes it easier for Member States to support financially the development and market uptake of cleaner technologies, using related provisions in the Community Guidelines on Research, Development and Innovation, the Guidelines on Environmental Protection and the General Block Exemption.

In addition, the revised Emissions Trading Directive<sup>(7)</sup> reserves 300 million allowances for support of CCS and innovative renewables. The European Economic Recovery Plan includes clear measures to speed up the shift towards a low carbon and resource efficient economy, including almost €4 billion on energy projects.

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(7) Directive 2003/87/EC of Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 2003 establishing a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community and amending Council Directive 96/61/EC (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 275, 25.10.2003.

**Question no 32 by Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines(H-0297/09)****Subject: Impact of wind farms on biodiversity, the landscape and the local environment**

Given that an integrated environmental policy is one of the EU's basic principles, it seems logical that the development of renewable energy should be compatible with the conservation of biodiversity, which includes the local environment, the landscape, the soil and flora and fauna.

Is the environmental impact which wind farms have on biodiversity and, in particular, birds of prey and other types of birds, as well as on areas of natural beauty and of historical and urban significance being considered on the basis of rigorous scientific criteria?

If there is no adequate legal basis for this, would the Commission consider supplementing existing legislation with a view to ensuring that the operation of wind farms is compatible with the conservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage?

**Answer**

(EN) The development of wind energy forms part of the European Community's commitment to achieve a 20% share of renewable energies in overall EU energy consumption by 2020. This is a key element of the strategy to tackle CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the context of climate change. It supports other EU energy and environmental policy objectives - for example in terms of reduced air pollution, reduced water consumption from conventional power generation, reduced energy import dependency and increased job creation.

However, the Commission is aware that there are environmental risks from the inappropriate location of wind farms. Wind energy developments should be carried out in a sustainable and balanced way that does not lead to significant damage to sensitive areas of conservation importance: Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive<sup>(8)</sup>, and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) established under the Habitats Directive<sup>(9)</sup>, which form the Natura 2000 network.

Wind farms are also included in Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive<sup>(10)</sup>. For projects listed in Annex II, Member States are required to determine whether an environmental impact assessment is required. Criteria such as the characteristics of the project, its location and the characteristics of the potential impact are to be taken into account.

This means that an EIA is required if these projects are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The EIA must take into account different factors, such as fauna and flora, but also human beings, soil, landscape or cultural heritage.

Any developments likely to have a significant adverse effect on Natura 2000 sites must be subject to an appropriate environmental assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. The Commission has provided general interpretative and methodological guidance on the application of this provision.

For public wind energy plans the provisions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive<sup>(11)</sup> are also applicable.

The Commission considers that this environmental legislation is sufficient to properly assess the possible impacts of wind farm projects on the natural and cultural environment.

The rigour and quality of these environmental impact assessments is a responsibility firstly of the developers and finally of the Member States' competent environmental authorities.

<sup>(8)</sup> Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the protection of wild birds, OJ L 103 of 25.4.1979.

<sup>(9)</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the protection of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206 of 22.7.1992.

<sup>(10)</sup> Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 175, 5.7.1985. As amended by Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997 (OJ L 73, 14.3.1997) and Directive 2003/35/EC of 26 May 2003 (OJ L 156, 25.6.2003).

<sup>(11)</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. OJ L 197, 21.7.2001.

To help them and to improve implementation, the Commission is working on specific guidelines on wind energy and nature conservation.

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**Question no 33 by Marian Harkin(H-0260/09)**

**Subject: Environmental legislation**

Given that over the past 30 years the European Commission has adopted a substantial and diverse range of environmental measures aimed at improving the quality of the environment, and given that our environment can be protected if Member States properly implement what they have signed up to do at a European level, what steps will the Commission take to encourage Member States to continue to support agri-environment schemes such as the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) in Ireland which seeks to incentivise farmers to carry out their farming activities in an environmentally friendly manner and to bring about environmental improvement on existing farms? In this light, would the Commission agree that decisions to cease support for new entrants to REPS 4 in Ireland are contrary to EU environmental goals?

**Answer**

(EN) Sustainable land management is a core objective of the EU's rural development policy. At least 25% of the total contribution of the rural development funding shall be allocated to axes 2 and agri-environment support is a key measure in this respect. Therefore Ireland, like all Member States must continue to support environmentally friendly farming and environmental improvement during the programming period of 2007-2013.

Ireland has submitted a proposal in July 2009 which modifies its rural development programme. The Commission understands that although the REPS scheme will be closed, a new Agri-Environment Options Scheme will replace it. The Commission is currently analysing the proposed scheme to see if it respects both the Irish National Strategy Plan and EU priorities and will notify Ireland of our conclusions in the coming months.

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**Question no 34 by Mairead McGuinness(H-0265/09)**

**Subject: Lisbon Treaty referendum in Ireland**

Can the Commission outline the reasons why it believes Ireland should vote 'yes' in the forthcoming referendum on the Lisbon Treaty and also the implications of a second 'no' vote for Europe?

**Answer**

(EN) The EU has grown to 27 Member States and half a billion citizens, while its current institutional set-up was designed for a much smaller Union. The Commission considers that the Treaty of Lisbon would make the EU more democratic, efficient and transparent. It would enhance the powers of the Parliament and strengthen the role of the national parliaments. It would give a stronger voice to the citizens by allowing them to call on the Commission to bring forward new policy initiatives.

On policy issues, the Treaty would allow the Union for example to fight more effectively against cross border crime, illegal immigration and trafficking of women and children. The Treaty would also give the Union a clearer voice on the international stage, on issues such as climate change and the fight against global poverty.

If ratified, the Lisbon Treaty would enable every Member State to have a Commissioner, implementing the decision of the European Council as part of the wider package of legally binding guarantees designed to meet the concerns expressed in the 2008 Irish referendum.

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**Question no 35 by Frank Vanhecke(H-0266/09)****Subject: Regularisation of illegal aliens in Belgium**

Contrary to European agreements following on from regularisation procedures in other countries, the Belgian Government recently decided to launch a fresh large-scale regularisation procedure for illegal aliens on 15 September 2009.

This is, moreover, the second time in just a few years that Belgium has carried out 'one-off' regularisation on a large scale.

Was the Commission informed of Belgium's intentions in advance?

Does the Commission take the view that, in doing so, Belgium is violating European agreements, and can other Member States take measures to refuse access to their territory to persons regularised in Belgium?

**Answer**

(FR) Firstly, the Commission would point out that the issue of regularisations is not regulated by Community law and falls under the jurisdiction of the Member States. Consequently, residence permits may be granted to illegal persons at the Member States' discretion within the scope of national legislation. A residence permit issued by a Schengen State is the equivalent of a visa and allows the holder to travel within the Schengen area. This also applies to residence permits issued in the case of regularisation.

However, the Pact on Immigration and Asylum contains the political undertaking by all Member States to 'use only case-by-case regularisation, rather than generalised regularisation, under national law, for humanitarian or economic reasons'. According to the available information, it would seem that the Belgian regularisation procedure is in line with this approach.

Taking account of the fact that migration-related measures adopted at national level may have an impact beyond national borders, in 2006 the Council created the mutual information mechanism (MIM). This mechanism enables the sharing of information on national measures (such as regularisations) that are liable to have a significant impact on several Member States. It should be noted that the application in practice of the MIM remains disappointing, since the Member States make only very limited use of it. Thus, in future, the Commission will integrate the MIM into the annual process for monitoring implementation of the Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

The Commission monitors the issue of regularisations closely. In early 2009 it published an external study on regularisation practices within the Member States. This study will be useful for its future deliberations. The communication on the Stockholm Programme mentions, with reference to regularisations, the need to improve information sharing and the possibility of developing guidelines.

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**Question no 36 by Seán Kelly(H-0268/09)****Subject: Rural Environmental Protection Scheme in Ireland**

What amount of funding has been made available to Ireland under the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme? Has the Commission received any communication from the Irish Government regarding its plans for the implementation of the REPS 4 programme?

**Answer**

(EN) At the start of the 2007-2013 programming period Ireland chose to allocate €2 billion to the REPS scheme, almost half of its total programme budget. The EU co-financed this at a rate of 55%. On top of this, the Irish government also made an additional €414 million of national money available for the scheme.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July, Ireland notified the Commission of its decision to close the REPS scheme to new entrants citing budgetary constraints as the reason. At the same time, it indicated its intention to replace REPS with a new Agri-Environment Options Scheme. The Commission is currently analysing the changes proposed and will notify Ireland of its conclusions in the coming months.

It should be stressed that it is Member States who decide how to divide their budget for rural development programmes between the different measures. Ireland has chosen, and will continue to invest heavily in agri-environment irrespective of the closure of REPS.

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**Question no 37 by Nikolaos Chountis(H-0269/09)**

**Subject: Establishment of a landfill site in the Grammatiko region of Attica**

In its answer to a previous question (E-0544/09) on the establishment of landfill sites in the areas of Fili, Grammatiko and Keratea in Attica, the Commission stressed, inter alia, that 'compliance with specific conditions [such as the preprocessing of waste in accordance with Directive 1999/31/EC] ... provided by the decisions and linked to the interim payments is neither considered to be satisfactory in the three cases.'

In view of the fact that the residents in the area of Grammatiko are strongly opposed to the establishment of the new landfill site in the area since it does not fulfil the conditions laid down by Directive 1999/31/EC<sup>(12)</sup> on the landfill of waste, will the Commission say what immediate steps it will take to stop the establishment of the landfill site at Grammatiko because the conditions laid down by Directive 1999/31/EC are not met?

**Answer**

(FR) Commission Decision C(2004)5509 granting Cohesion Fund assistance to the landfill site construction project at Grammatiko includes a series of specific payment-related conditions. These conditions derive mainly from Directive 1999/31/EC<sup>(13)</sup> on the treatment of waste and the construction and operation of landfills, and must be respected if the Commission is to make the payments. As the Commission has also indicated in its response to question E-0544/09<sup>(14)</sup> put by the honourable Member, it believes that compliance with these specific conditions is unsatisfactory at present. Therefore it will not be paying the expenses of the projects concerned. If this situation of non-compliance with the specific conditions were to continue, the Commission would reserve the right to suspend the payments pursuant to Article H(1) of Annex II to Council Regulation No 1164/94, as amended by Regulation No 1265/99<sup>(15)</sup>. In any event, the Commission would assure the honourable Member that it will see to it that Community law, including the requirements pursuant to Directive 1999/31/EC, is respected at all times, no matter what the source of funding.

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**Question no 38 by Eleni Theocharous(H-0275/09)**

**Subject: Colonisation of Cyprus**

The Cuco and Laakso reports drawn up on behalf of the Council of Europe describe the colonisation of the occupied northern part of the island by Turkey as a war crime and a time bomb preventing any solution to the problem. According to the Turkish press, the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan intends to send another million settlers to Cyprus.

Does the European Union - and in particular does the Commission - support the idea that a population census should be held throughout Cyprus organised by the EU and/or the Council of Europe?

Does the European Union intend to take measures against Turkey if it continues to colonise the occupied northern part of Cyprus? If so, what measures?

<sup>(12)</sup> OJ L 182, 16.7.1999, p. 1.

<sup>(13)</sup> Directive 1999/31/EC of the Council of 26 April 1999, OJ L 182 of 16.7.1999

<sup>(14)</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/QP-WEB>

<sup>(15)</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1265/1999 of 21 June 1999 amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1164/94 establishing a Cohesion Fund, OJ L 161 of 26.6.1999



**Answer**

(EN) The issue of Turkish citizens now resident in the northern part of Cyprus raised by the Honourable Member highlights the urgent need for a rapid solution to the Cyprus problem as this issue will be an essential part of the solution.

The Commission fully supports the efforts of the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus to achieve such a comprehensive settlement under UN auspices.

Achieving a solution will require hard work and the Commission is confident that in the end the two communities, with the guidance of the UN<sup>(16)</sup> and the support of the EU, can succeed.

The Commission also expects Turkey to put all its weight behind a solution.

The Commission strongly believes that the coming period provides a window of opportunity that should not be missed.

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**Question no 39 by Proinsias De Rossa(H-0276/09)****Subject: Transposition of Article 13 of race equality directive in Ireland**

Further to its answer of 16 December 2008 to my question P-6503/08, could the Commission indicate whether it has initiated proceedings against the Irish authorities regarding the transposition in Ireland of Article 13 of the race equality directive (2000/43/EC<sup>(17)</sup>), or any other similar provisions of EC law, and outline the current status of these proceedings?

**Answer**

(EN) The Commission invites the Honourable Member to refer to its reply to priority question P-6503/08 on the same subject.

The Commission also recalls that the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) does not require the Member States to provide for any particular rate of funding or organisational structure for equality bodies. In the absence of evidence suggesting that the budget available is not sufficient for the Equality Authority to carry out its duties, the Commission cannot intervene under the terms of the Directive.

Information on infringement procedures that have been initiated against the Irish authorities in respect of the Anti-discrimination Directives can be found in the Commission's press releases in the 'Related Documents' section of the website at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=613&langId=en>.

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**Question no 40 by Athanasios Pafilis(H-0288/09)****Subject: Harsh and unpopular measures**

The measures adopted by the EU and the Member State governments in the context of the anti-labour decisions taken at the informal EU employment summit of 7 May 2009 in Prague constitute a harsh attack on workers with the aim of safeguarding the profits made by monopolies.

The reports drawn up by the ESF, the IMF and the OECD represent the ideological pedestal for capital to introduce new 'structural changes' designed to bring about even harsher and more sweeping anti-labour measures, in particular: the generalised use of flexible forms of employment, an attack on collective agreements, drastic cuts in pay and pensions, an increase in the retirement age and a rise in tax for employees, pensioners and the self-employed, as well as the privatisation of health, welfare and education.

<sup>(16)</sup> United Nations

<sup>(17)</sup> OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

Will the Commission's guidelines for 'lasting structural reforms', which it is discussing and jointly deciding on with the New Democracy Government in Greece, include the harsh and unpopular measures described above?

#### Answer

(EN) The Commission does not consider that the measures adopted by the EU and Member State governments in response to the financial and economic crisis can, in any way, be described as a 'harsh attack on workers with the aim of safeguarding the profits made by monopolies'. The overriding aim of those measures is to stem rising unemployment and to underpin eventual recovery, so that people throughout the EU can benefit from growth as soon as possible.

The EU Employment Summit held in Prague on 7 May took no decisions. The ten recommendations published should be considered a well-balanced set of policy priorities to create new jobs, maintain people in employment and promote active social inclusion. Furthermore, the social partners, and thus the trade unions, attended and participated actively in the Employment Summit.

The Commission has advocated more flexible labour markets, but has always stressed that these should be accompanied by more security for employment. The Commission has also advocated an increase in the retirement age to reflect the greater longevity of Europeans and the need to ensure that pension systems are socially sustainable. In order to ensure the long-term adequacy and sustainability of their pension systems, all Member States, including Greece, are faced with the challenge of raising the effective age at which people stop working and of securing employment for more people to work longer. In Greece's case, this could involve increasing the pension eligibility age in public schemes.

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#### Question no 41 by Tadeusz Zwiefka(H-0291/09)

**Subject: Outcome of 2nd EU-Egypt subcommittee meeting on 'Political Matters: Human Rights and Democracy - International and Regional Issues' on 7-8 July 2009 concerning 'Al-Manar TV'**

The broadcasting of the outlawed terrorist channel 'Al-Manar TV' to Europe by the Egyptian satellite provider Nilesat continues to be in direct violation of the EU-Egypt Action Plan and constitutes a radicalisation threat to European security. In its reply to Question H-0011/09 the Commission has stated that the subcommittee on political matters with Egypt is the 'appropriate mechanism' for raising the broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' by Nilesat. Did the Commission raise the issue of Nilesat's broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' with Egypt during the 2nd EU-Egypt subcommittee meeting on 'Political Matters: Human Rights and Democracy – International and Regional Issues' on 7-8 July 2009? Could the Commission outline what commitments Egypt gave in order to stop the broadcasting of 'Al-Manar TV' on Nilesat?

#### Answer

(EN) The Commission would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question regarding the recent EU-Egypt subcommittee on political matters and the Egyptian satellite provider NileSat, which broadcasts the TV station Al-Manar.

The Commission shares the concern of the Honourable Member that material broadcast by Al-Manar may amount to incitement to hatred.

Both Egypt and the EU are committed, as set down in our joint Action Plan established in 2007 in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to "co-operate to combat all forms of discrimination, intolerance, racism and xenophobia, and in particular hate or defamatory discourse based on religion, beliefs, race, or origin...." The Commission is also committed to strengthening the role of media in combating these phenomena.

The second meeting of the EU-Egypt Subcommittee on Political Matters, held in Cairo in July, was a further step towards deepening political relations with Egypt and building confidence in the process of political dialogue.

During the meeting, the Commission did indeed raise the issue of Al-Manar TV transmission via NileSat. The Commission expressed concern over the channel's content, which contravenes EU legislation against hate speech and undermines the EU's and Egypt's efforts to promote peace and security in the region.

Egypt did not offer comments on this occasion or make any commitment to stop the broadcasting of Al-Manar TV via NileSat.

The Commission will continue to pay close attention to this issue and may raise it on another occasion under the EU's regular political dialogue with Egypt.

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#### **Question no 42 by Ryszard Czarnecki(H-0293/09)**

##### **Subject: Violation of EU law by sports clubs**

Will the Commission react - and if so, how - to the violation of EU law on equal treatment of nationals of different Member States which occurred when the Danish government refused to allow Polish and Dutch nationals in possession of valid tickets to attend the Champions' League qualifier between Brøndby Copenhagen and Legia Warsaw? This was discrimination. People carrying valid Belgian identity cards were also not allowed to watch the match. Similarly, the Belgian authorities of Club Brugge refused to allow Polish officials from the European Commission and the European Parliament to buy tickets for the match between Club Brugge and Lech Poznań last week (27 August 2009). This is yet another example of clear discrimination on the basis of country of origin. Does this mean that the rules laid down by certain sports clubs, in Denmark and Belgium, for example, prevail over EU law?

##### **Answer**

(EN) As regards the alleged entry ban imposed by the Danish authorities on Polish and Dutch nationals in possession of valid tickets for the Champions' League match between Brøndby Copenhagen and Legia Warszawa, the Commission would welcome clarification as to whether the ban concerned the entry into the country or into the stadium as well as to if it was indeed imposed by the state authorities or the match organisers themselves. It would also be very useful to know the reasons invoked by the authorities or the match organisers when not allowing the persons concerned to attend the match.

In this context, it should be noted that it follows from the settled European Court of Justice case law<sup>(18)</sup> that Article 49 of the EC Treaty, guaranteeing the free provision of services throughout the EU, includes also the freedom for the recipients of services to go to another Member State in order to receive a service there, without being obstructed by restrictions unless these restrictions can be justified by overriding reasons of general interest such as security or public order and they are proportionate. This principle is also enshrined in Article 20 of the Services Directive 2006/123/EC<sup>(19)</sup> (to be transposed by Member States by 28 December 2009) according to which Member States shall ensure

i) that the services recipient is not made subject to discriminatory requirements based on his nationality or place of residence

and

ii) that the general conditions of access to a service, which are made available to the public at large by the provider, do not contain discriminatory provisions relating to the nationality or place of residence of the recipient, but without precluding the possibility of providing for differences in the conditions of access where those differences are directly justified by objective criteria.

With regard to the right of EU citizens to move and reside freely, Directive 2004/38/EC<sup>(20)</sup> entitles Member States to deny EU citizens entry to the territory only on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. The restrictive measures must comply with the principle of proportionality and must be based exclusively on the personal conduct of the EU citizen concerned which must represent a genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat affecting one of the fundamental interests of society.

<sup>(18)</sup> ECJ 186/87 Cowan v Trésor Publique, C- 45/93 Commission v Spain.

<sup>(19)</sup> Directive 2006/123/EC of Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market, OJ L 376, 27.12.2006.

<sup>(20)</sup> Directive 2004/38/EC of Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, OJ L 158, 30.4.2004.

From the above, therefore, it does not follow that an entry ban would necessarily constitute unlawful discrimination or an unjustified restriction under Community law. It is worth mentioning that according to the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Regulations of the Champions' League, it is the home club who is responsible for order and security before, during and after the game.

As a result, to judge whether the alleged behaviour of the Danish authorities or the match organiser was in breach with Community law would require a more precise knowledge of the circumstances of the specific case.

As for the alleged denial by the Club Brugge to sell tickets to Polish nationals, officials of the EU Institutions, for the match between Club Brugge and Lech Poznan, the above reasoning with regard to non-discrimination and to unlawful restriction on free provision of services applies in a similar way. Again, more details would be needed to assess the compliance of the alleged behaviour with EC law.

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### **Question no 43 by Antonio Cancian(H-0294/09)**

#### **Subject: Violence against Christians in Pakistan**

August saw an escalation in violence by Islamic fundamentalists against Christians in the Punjab (Pakistan). The local authorities are tolerant of the extremists, who invoke Section 295 of the Pakistani Criminal Code, known as the 'blasphemy law'. The international and Catholic communities have condemned 'the senseless attack on the Christian community', and hope that these harsh provisions will be repealed. How does the Commission intend to handle the cooperation agreement with Pakistan (2004/870/EC<sup>(21)</sup>), with a view to protecting the human rights of religious minorities in accordance with the democratic clause?

#### **Answer**

(EN) The Commission is aware of the Gojra incidents, and the violence against Christians there can only be described as appalling. It should like to mention at the outset, though, that it is not only Christians, but also other minorities, including Shias and Ahmadis, who are suffering from extremist violence in Pakistan.

The Commission has raised the issue of religious minorities repeatedly during Joint Commissions and as part of the Troika dialogue. It will continue to raise this matter with Pakistan at every opportunity as part of the human rights dialogue.

Pakistani officials are fully aware that atrocities as the ones seen in Gojra not only cause immense personal suffering but tarnish Pakistan's image. The Commission understands that the government has taken action in response to the incidents, including compensation for any loss of property and the establishment of a commission of enquiry. It will follow the situation closely, in particular progress in bringing the culprits to justice.

The Commission has also repeatedly brought up the blasphemy laws with the Government of Pakistan as part of the human rights dialogue. The Commission understands that, in absolute terms, the majority of those accused under the laws belong to the Muslim faith. But it is conscious of the fact that the blasphemy laws have often been applied against religious minorities, and have been given to understand that false accusations have been used as a tool to settle private disputes or for personal gain.

The Gojra incidents have given rise to renewed calls in Pakistan's civil society to reform or repeal the blasphemy laws. The Commission would welcome such initiatives and will pass this message to the Pakistan government.

Article 1 of the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Partnership and Development refers to respect for human rights and democratic principles as an essential element of the Agreement. On the occasion of the 17 June 2009 Summit, both the EU and Pakistan stressed the importance of having an open and constructive dialogue in human rights forums. The Cooperation Agreement forms the basis for such a dialogue and the Commission believes the way forward is to continue to engage Pakistan on human rights issues.

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<sup>(21)</sup> OJ L 378, 23.12.2004, p. 2/22

**Question no 44 by Hans-Peter Martin(H-0296/09)****Subject: Changes resulting from the Lisbon Treaty**

In the event of the (belated) entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, will Commissioners currently in office receive higher pension entitlements or other additional pecuniary benefits?

**Answer**

(FR) The Treaty of Lisbon has not changed the pension scheme for commissioners, which is based on Regulation 422/67/EEC of 25 July 1967<sup>(22)</sup>.

In accordance with this regulation, a commissioner shall acquire pension rights throughout his term of office. Therefore, if his term of office is extended, his rights shall increase until the actual end of the term.

Similarly, under the same regulation, the temporary allowance to which commissioners are entitled in the three years following the end of their term of office could be increased for certain commissioners who, due to the extension of their term of office, reach the duration required to be upgraded to another category of entitlements (Article 7(1) of the Regulation).

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<sup>(22)</sup> Council Regulation No 422/67/EEC, No 5/67/Euratom of 25 July 1967 determining the emoluments of the President and members of the Commission, and of the President, Judges, Advocates-General and Registrar of the Court of Justice, OJ 187 of 8.8.1967.