

THURSDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2010

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

1. Opening of the sitting

(The sitting was opened at 09.00)

María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, yesterday, because of the time it took to get through our work here in the House, there was no opportunity to mention the recent death of Orlando Zapata, which the Spanish delegation sincerely laments. He died after a long hunger strike. He is the first prisoner of conscience to die in Cuba in 40 years, and we are calling here for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Cuba and in the rest of the world. We would also like to express our solidarity with his family and with the Cuban people on their path to pluralism and development.

This very sad occasion could act as a catalyst for a discussion aimed at positioning the relations between the European Union and Cuba, within a comprehensive bilateral framework providing for permanent, constructive dialogue on human rights, on an equal footing with the European Union's agreements with third countries.

2. Documents received: see Minutes

3. Situation in Ukraine (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

4. Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A7-0014/2010) by Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries, on the Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy (COM(2009)0163 - 2009/2106(INI)).

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, rapporteur. – (PT) Permit me to address a few words to the group of 50 fishermen who should be entering the Chamber just now, and who are here to watch this debate and the vote on the report.

I think I can speak for all my colleagues in the Committee on Fisheries, who have worked hard on this report, when I say that I am very happy that this day has arrived, the day on which the report is to be presented to Parliament and put to the vote. Why? Because the common fisheries policy is one of the flagship policies of the European Union. It had a rather difficult start, having been formally launched in the 80s and undergoing its first reform in 2002. Today, we are aware of some of the main problems that were identified back then (I am referring to overcapacity, overfishing, and overinvestment that, it appears, was not equal across the whole EU), because these problems are still largely present today.

This is the starting point for the reform, a reform that has to be broad and intensive, and which has long been awaited by the industry.

Which direction should this reform take, according to the content of our report? Firstly, in terms of basic principles, there needs to be a balance between environmental, social and economic aspects. Environmental aspects are needed to guarantee the conservation of stocks; social aspects to guarantee the advancement and dignity of the profession; and economic aspects to guarantee that the industry can generate income. Without these three aspects, we will not have any fisheries in the European Union, or, at least, there will be none that are sustainable and capable of developing, which is what we all want.

How should these general principles, aimed at reducing fishing, making more profit and conserving stocks better, be implemented? The report points out certain fundamental aspects: investment in decentralisation; promoting the empowerment of fishermen and the entire fishing industry to have decision-making powers; giving them greater involvement in managing fishing, which will also allow a policy of compliance and responsibility; the need to draw a distinction between small-scale and industrial fleets, with specific regulations for each; the need to appraise management models that are better adapted to different fishing areas and different types of fisheries; the importance of strengthening the market by fishing that is aimed at value-added

products and increasing the first-sale price; linking subsidies with good practice; regulation of the modernisation of the fleet in terms of safety and hygiene; decisive development of aquaculture, which is ecologically sustainable within the European Union; and the development of other sectors involved in catching or processing fish. We should not forget to draw attention to the growing role of women in fisheries either, and the need to require that fishery products from third countries, which are imported to the EU, be subject to the same requirements as those of our producers. This means certification, labelling, traceability and, finally, the integration of fisheries into European maritime policy within the broader context of enhancing its capacity.

Let me finish by saying that the work that we present here today is the product of a joint effort by all the members of the Committee on Fisheries, particularly the shadow rapporteurs, with whom we worked very hard, and also with the Commission, the Secretariat of the European Parliament, the advisor to the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and other advisors to other political groups, and, of course, my office and my assistant for fisheries. The work that we are presenting here today represents a truly joint effort, and we hope that it will be adopted here too.

Juan Carlos Martín Fragueiro, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, the Presidency also welcomes this debate in the European Parliament as it is an important contribution to the broad consultation procedure on the Green Paper, and the European Parliament's contributions should therefore be given serious consideration by the Commission when it draws up its legislative proposals.

The Council is also going to examine carefully all of Parliament's opinions to enable it to subsequently examine and adopt the legislative proposals under the ordinary legislative procedure.

The Green Paper of April 2009 looks at various structural constraints in the common fisheries policy: overcapacity, lack of precise objectives, adoption of short-term decisions, lack of responsibility in the sector and poor compliance in general.

The Green Paper also set out possible ways of combating these structural constraints and looked at important issues such as the differentiated regimes for industrial fleets and small-scale coastal fleets, waste, relative stability, transferable individual rights, greater orientation towards the markets, integration of the common fisheries policy into the broader maritime policy context, public financing and the external dimension of the CFP.

The Member States, both individually and jointly in the Council, are studying in detail all aspects of the questions concerned. The first consultation phase ended in December 2009 and the Commission has received 1 700 proposals and held more than 125 meetings and seminars to date.

The second phase, which will begin on 1 September of this year, will analyse the contributions made and discuss the main ideas. In January, the Commission organised seminars on the key elements of the reform and on rights-based fisheries management, and even today there is a seminar on small-scale fishing. The impact assessment will be conducted in March. The European Fisheries Fund and the future financial perspective will be dealt with in April, followed by the external dimension in May, and waste and selectivity in June.

On 2 and 3 May, the conference being organised jointly by the Presidency and the Commission will be held in La Coruña. It will deal with three fundamental elements of the reform, namely governance, stock management and the differentiation between large-scale and small-scale fisheries.

On 4 and 5 May, the ministers will meet in Vigo to examine the results of the conference, and it is possible that the June Council will include in its agenda an informal debate on a working document concerning possible changes.

In the third phase, as I said before, which will begin in the second half of 2010, the Commission will present a White Paper and, subsequently, four legislative proposals: the basic regulation, the new COM, technical measures and the new regulation on financing. The objective is for the CFP to enter into force, with the new reform, on 1 January 2013.

The Council has yet to adopt a position in this respect; it will only adopt formal decisions on the basis of the legislative proposals it receives from the Commission in 2011, and it will do so in accordance with the rules on the ordinary legislative procedure.

Maria Damanaki, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, since this is my first speech as a Commissioner to the Members of this House, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the European Parliament. I feel very honoured to be here with you and discuss the reform of the common fisheries policy, which is a core issue for the whole sector. I want to congratulate the rapporteur, Mrs Neves, on her hard work in bringing together different positions into a consistent document. I could not agree more that we need radical reform to turn around the structural failings of our policy. As you all know, the last reform in 2002 was not sufficiently successful.

Now we have to tackle all the past deficits, to achieve better results from an environmental, social and economic aspect. The public consultation has shown clearly that there is broad support for this reform. Of course, I will not be able to respond today to all issues raised in your report, which is due to be voted on. However, I bear in mind your compromise amendments on sustainability, over-capacity, small-scale fisheries, horizontal decentralisation, phasing-out of discards, new fisheries agreements and deployment in the fishing sector. I am very thankful for your constructive input.

I would like to highlight two specific issues: first, public funding. I believe we have to focus our subsidies to achieve better results by steering them towards the objectives of our policy. For example, instead of supporting the building of new vessels, we should support innovation for selectivity and greening and help producer organisations respond to the future challenges.

Secondly, I share your views on the social dimension: we want a fishery which creates attractive and safe jobs. Today I am looking forward to hearing your proposals during this debate.

Let me also inform you of our next steps. We will prepare a summary report on last year's consultation which will help us prepare the proposals for the new policy. We are organising workshops to discuss specific topics with stakeholders, the institutions and the Member States. Together with the Spanish Presidency, a broad conference of CFP reform will be held in May.

I know, and it has already been mentioned, that there is a technical workshop taking place in the Commission at this very moment, with participants from all over Europe. I am sorry that you cannot attend this workshop. This workshop was organised a long time ago. I will try, if at all possible, to make sure that meetings do not clash in future.

On the basis of this input, in late 2010, we will start to develop our proposals to be adopted in the Commission in spring 2011. This large consultation process will culminate in a very fruitful discussion with you. You, as legislators, will then have a major role to play in shaping the new policy together with the Council. I am really looking forward to cooperating with you.

Antonello Antinoro, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to the Council for its comments, and I would like to thank and wish the best of luck to the new Commissioner – who is making her debut today in this House – for the work that we are preparing to carry out.

I believe that what we are implementing is important, and I hope that this Green Paper, which we are beginning to discuss today and which we will vote on later, does not end up as it did in 2002.

Today, however, the European Parliament finds itself in a different position. We have the ordinary legislative procedure and the Treaty of Lisbon, and therefore I believe that we will all have to take advantage of them in order to meet the objectives.

The key points have been described by our rapporteur, Mrs Patrão Neves, to whom we, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), express our gratitude for the work she has done, for the summary she has been able to present and for everything she has been able to outline.

I merely wished to take the floor and to take advantage of this opportunity so as to broach the subject of fisheries, but by going beyond the normal Green Paper – and the White Paper that has been announced for June – and addressing the needs that exist in relation to Europe's seas, and to the Mediterranean in particular.

Today we need to set ourselves rules that we have already been imposing on our economy and on our fishermen for a number of years. However, coastal states, even those bordering Europe, have wilfully and often, indeed very often, ignored these rules, and we find ourselves in the paradoxical situation in which all this is imposed on our fishermen, while the others can do as they like.

Today, the European Commission has a different and more powerful role; it has a Minister for Foreign Affairs and a more powerful Parliament. My hope is that, within the Green Paper, and before embarking on the

White Paper, we can work with third countries – those countries that are not part of the Union – in order to come up with shared and common rules to ensure that those who are subject to the rules do not feel betrayed or ignored by the Union and do not view the Union as an enemy rather than as a friend.

Josefa Andrés Barea, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Thank you, Mr Martín Fragueiro, welcome, and thank you, Mrs Damanaki.

I, too, am speaking here for the first time on the topic of fisheries, and indeed we are facing a significant challenge in this area. We are obliged, and it is our responsibility, to define the guidelines that are going to guarantee the sustainability of the seas, fisheries and, in short, the planet itself.

We are also talking about an important element of production in our countries, at our coasts, in our regions – an economic and cultural element that encompasses many values – and as you quite rightly said, Mrs Damanaki, there are problems with the 2002 reform.

We need to revise the principle of relative stability and we need to look for new approaches to management that are more flexible and more adaptable because there have been problems with the TACs and quotas. There have been problems because of the all-too-familiar discard issue, discards that we cannot allow for the sake of our fishermen or for the sake of our planet.

The future reform of the CFP must ensure a sustainable fishing system and we are in favour of a new management system based on fishing effort. We have to be more open, we have to think about things and we have to try to make management more flexible.

We need to ensure widespread introduction of environmental criteria and differentiate between coastal fishing and deep sea fishing. This is important and it is something that the entire sector wants. We need to reduce the overcapacity of certain fleets. We also need to finalise the common organisation of the market and work out how to stabilise the market and how to reconcile it with fish imports from third countries.

The fight against illegal fishing, which has been criticised and which has been ineffective to date, needs additional resources, harmonised sanctions and international agreements based on principles of law, principles of human rights and principles of compliance with the agreements.

A financial framework, which you said must produce better results, has to produce better results than the current policy.

Above all, we need to think about the social dimension: we are talking about people and we have to ensure that they have dignity, have a sense of professionalism, are given professional recognition and have the economic capacity to survive.

Of course, we must not forget about the integration of women, who represent the invisible side of the fisheries world. We must bring them to the forefront and make an extra effort for them.

The reform of the fisheries policies is more than simply drawing up legislation. It means tackling an important part of the reform, from within the European Union, that is going to guarantee the sustainability of the seas, fishermen and part of the planet.

As a result, we must be courageous in the face of the challenges, and being courageous means tackling a policy without any fear. We must leave our fears behind. We must tackle the situation head on and maintain the balance of the state, of the European Union and of the world.

Carl Haglund, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (SV) Mr President, for those of us who have worked hard on this Green Paper and the report, it feels extremely good to have now got as far as plenary. First of all, I would like to thank the rapporteur, who has done an excellent job.

Our common fisheries policy needs to be reformed. For the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, it was important for the reform to be based on an ecosystem approach. The wording in this regard in the report is good. At the same time, we are facing a situation where serious problems need to be dealt with, like the discards, the enormous overcapacity that exists in some places and many other things besides. I am therefore pleased that we have been able to agree on measures to tackle these things in particular. Who really thinks that the EU's discard policy is justifiable? I certainly do not.

Another important issue is the regionalisation of the common fisheries policy. Where the situation is so different in different places in Europe, it is important that decisions can be made and applied at regional

level. Another welcome reform is the intention to introduce a separate approach for small-scale coastal fisheries. These are also issues that we brought up in the ALDE Group report.

As a Finn and someone who lives next to the Baltic Sea, I am also pleased about the statement relating to the possibility of taking measures to tackle oversized seal and cormorant populations, as this is one of the greatest threats to fisheries in the Baltic Sea.

Finally, I would like to mention the fisheries agreement with third countries. It is important for our policy in this regard to go hand in hand with the EU's human rights policy. The agreement with Guinea is a good example of where Parliament voted against the agreement, and this points towards the route we should take in the future.

I am very happy to see how far the reform has progressed. We have a good Green Paper and I am certain that we will have a much better fisheries policy from 2013 onwards.

Isabella Lövin, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (SV) Mr President, Commissioner Damanaki, ladies and gentlemen, my eyes were opened to the EU's common fisheries policy and its destructive consequences in 2002, when, following a majority vote in the Swedish Parliament, Sweden decided on a unilateral ban on cod fishing for a year, but was prevented from implementing it by the European Commission.

Despite the fact the Sweden intended to compensate its commercial fishermen for the ban and the fact that researchers in the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea had recommended a total ban on cod fishing for a number of years and despite the fact that the various cod stocks along the Swedish coast had been wiped out or reduced by between 70 and 90%, the principle of the common fisheries policy was more important. If everyone else overfishes, Sweden must overfish too, according to the Commission. In other words, exploitation was mandatory for EU Member States.

The last reform of the fisheries policy was completed in 2002 and it has not proved capable of tackling the difficult problems that the fisheries industry was already facing ten years ago, namely that far too many vessels that are far too efficient are competing for far too few, and increasingly fewer, fish. The last vessels to catch bluefin tuna were subsidised by the EU as recently as 2005 in the Mediterranean. Between 2000 and 2008, EU taxpayers shelled out EUR 34 million to build and modernise tuna vessels at a time when stocks were on the verge of collapse. A similar logic is in evidence in the Baltic Sea. In recent years, the Swedish Board of Fisheries has paid out EUR 5.4 million to scrap some of the largest tuna fishing vessels – the same vessels that were built with the aid of EU money.

A radical reform of the fisheries policy is needed. We believe that all types of harmful subsidies must be stopped. EU vessels with tax-free fuel and access agreements provided by taxpayers are currently emptying African seas of vital food supplies and competing unfairly with African fishermen, while at the same time destroying ecosystems.

Ahead of today's vote on the report on the Green Paper, I would call on all of my fellow Members to at least remove one bad paragraph from an otherwise largely excellent report. I am referring to paragraph 121, which states that the EU's external fisheries policy should defend European fisheries interests. I do not think that it befits the EU to pursue such a policy in 2010.

Marek Józef Gróbarczyk, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, Mrs Damanaki, at the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mrs Patrão Neves for the effort she has put into the preparation of this report. Great determination is needed, as well as a sense of compromise, to create such a coherent document. This report is, however, only the basis for building future common fisheries policy, which requires thorough reconstruction and fundamental changes so that care for the natural environment can be reconciled with development of the historical heritage of fishing. The policy must be based on regionalisation, which will, itself, be based on the conditions prevailing in different regions. This will enable correct assessment based on opinions from within the fishing industry as well as scientific opinions, and the compromise which is adopted will ensure the fair and equal management of fishing.

The new fisheries policy must stimulate development of the industry in a Europe which is engulfed in the crisis, but it is also necessary to pay attention to the predatory industrial fishing being carried out particularly in the Baltic Sea, where healthy and valuable fish are being turned into fish meal for use on poultry and cattle farms, and, in exchange, the toxic Far East panga arrives on the tables of Europeans. This is a blow aimed at sustainable European coastal fishing, an industry which should be accorded particular care.

It also shows the necessity of establishing a rational and fair system of catches to replace the easily manipulated quota system. This is to give an equal chance to all fishermen in all countries of the European Union. The European Conservatives and Reformists endorse the report, in the hope that the current system will change.

João Ferreira, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) In its Green Paper, the Commission tries to establish a phased or unphased Community system of transferable fishing rights, or private property rights for access to the use of a public good, namely fish stocks.

This proposal was rejected when the last reform was carried out, but ten years on, the Commission is back in charge, and it is the one predicting the inevitable consequences of privatising stocks: the concentration of activity by groups with greater economic and financial power and the destruction of a substantial number of small-scale, coastal fisheries. It is revealing that the countries that opted for this route, such as Iceland, now want to withdraw, as they are confronted with the adverse consequences and perversities of this system.

Parliament should take a clear stance by rejecting this proposal. Incidentally, this solution is not any kind of guarantee that the sustainability of fish stocks will be protected, since the reduction and concentration of rights among a handful of operators does not necessarily mean a reduction in fishing effort, but simply the concentration of the exploitation of resources.

Protecting the sustainability of resources requires other measures, such as guaranteeing a fair return within the sector. This in turn requires intervention in the market and improved marketing in the sector; improving the first-sale price, increasing pay for work by fishermen, reducing the margins of middlemen and promoting fair distribution of added value throughout the value chain of this sector.

The reality of fisheries in the EU is complex and diverse. In these circumstances, the widely recognised importance of local government directly contradicts the institutional framework created by the Treaty of Lisbon, which sets out the conservation of marine biological resources as the sole remit of the European Union.

We need management that is supported by scientific knowledge, and which takes account of the reality and specific features of each country, each fishing zone, each fleet, and the resources themselves. This means involving the fishermen in finding solutions and implementing them. This is very different from the mere decentralised implementation of a centrally defined policy.

John Bufton, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – Mr President, I want to appeal to Commissioner Damanaki for sensitivity to Britain in the reworking of the common fisheries policy which seeks to include recreational sea angling in the regulation and control of sea fishing.

I thought the whole point of quotas was to prevent diminishing stocks. European fisheries policy has been so unsuccessful in achieving sustainability that 91% of fisheries are on course to be classified as overfished by 2015.

But the problem is how waters are being fished, not by whom. Indiscriminate trawling and longline fishing empty our seas of marine life. But throwing back into the sea dead fish that have already been caught and are good for the table is surely the opposite of sustainability.

What is sustainable fishing, however, is recreational sea angling, which is enjoyed by around a million people in the UK and which supports business thought to be worth around EUR 2 billion in tackle trade alone across the continent.

Some 19 000 people are employed in some 1 300 businesses in England and Wales as a result of the recreational angling industry. Recreational sea anglers catch and remove from the sea only what they intend to eat, leaving small young fish to develop and breed, and throwing back what they do not strictly need. In some cases, they tag the fish first, contributing to conservation programmes.

If the Commission gets its way, they will be forced to land everything they catch and count their quota against the national one.

Recreational sea angling supports ecologically sound self-sufficiency which, if practised by more people, would lessen the demand that currently fuels indiscriminate commercial fishing and puts whole species of marine life under threat.

The common fisheries policy has always been prejudiced against the British fleet, which is currently permitted to fish only 7% of the Channel cod quota and only one fifth of the quota in our own territorial waters.

Perhaps the Commissioner will see fit to favour the needs of harmless recreational fishermen in the UK in the same way as her predecessor showed open sensitivity to the needs of his own country's fishermen when he opposed a ban on the sale of bluefin tuna, an industry that earned EUR 100 million a year for his country, Malta.

The CFP has already wiped out most of what ought to have been a great renewable resource. Recreational sea anglers account for perhaps 1% of the total catch that remains. The Commission hesitates to protect a nearly endangered species, but sees fit to regulate fishing as a hobby. It just goes to show where the Commission's interests lie.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, for me and my constituents in Northern Ireland, the fishing industry and 27 years of the common fisheries policy is summed up in paragraph 138 of this report which reiterates that one of the few areas in which the CFP has been relatively successful is where Member States have had control.

The ideal for us would be the scrapping of the CFP or the United Kingdom's withdrawal from it, thus allowing Member States to take back control of their waters.

Regretfully, we are not living in this ideal world. The reform of the CFP will inevitably result in another second best for Northern Ireland's fishermen, a second best that has, for the past three decades, been marked by an unjustified decline of our fishing industry, and unanswered questions surrounding the state of those fish stocks on which our industry depends.

And this was absolutely demonstrated by the debacle around the December Fishing Council and the decisions on quotas.

Whilst it is very much a second best, I strongly support the regionalisation of the CFP as set out by the rapporteur. I support the view that the CFP should be based on three core principles of environmental, social and economic dimensions. And my most honest hope is that we can deliver a policy that will reverse the disastrous consequences of the CFP.

However, I fear that radical change promised by some in this review will result in another lost opportunity for our fishing industry and our fish stocks.

Carmen Fraga Estévez (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, everything is at stake in this reform. If we are not courageous now, there will not be another opportunity to create a genuine fisheries policy and we will be partly responsible for its failure.

The CFP has, for years, suffered increasingly justified criticism and it would be disheartening if, when we are being offered one last opportunity, this Parliament were to prove incapable of proposing alternatives to what we have criticised so many times, in particular, the obvious failure of the conservation and management system, as demonstrated by both the state of resources and the decline in the sector.

I simply cannot understand any reluctance to clearly suggest alternatives, as discussed in this House in 1996, such as transferable quota systems or effort-based management, which have had such positive results and which could help to maintain the more industrial fleets at least.

The report says that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution, but at the same time, it closes the door on the possibility that there might be other solutions. I do not understand the contradiction, nor do I understand why, if someone does not want to use an instrument, the solution must be to prohibit it for everyone.

That is not protection of the weakest; it is fear on the part of some sectors that only see permanent subsidies as solutions.

The CFP should also guarantee competitiveness in a globalised world of fisheries products. The market for these products will undoubtedly continue to grow but it seems that it will grow without us.

The policies within the Union should be coherent and we must ensure that the trade policy and rules on origin, such as those that appeared in the new economic partnership agreements, do not destroy the competitiveness of Community fisheries without being anything other than mere gestures to third countries; otherwise, it is our fisheries sector that will suffer.

Mr President, consensus is a good thing when it results in progress, but not when we remain motionless in the face of problems, and we have many problems to solve.

Ulrike Rodust (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome to all the fishermen and -women in the Chamber! Today's vote represents a milestone for the European Parliament. For the first time since the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, we have the opportunity to express our opinions on the reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP). In the next few years, our power and our responsibilities will increase significantly. This report is acceptable and I would like to thank Mrs Patrão Neves and Mrs Andrés Barea for their hard work.

We have succeeded in incorporating important social democratic concerns into the report. These include specific support for small-scale fisheries. Those affected will now be included in the decision-making process. Support must be given in particular to small family businesses. Their presence in the coastal regions not only provides jobs, but also increases the attractiveness of many of these regions for tourists. Some parts of this report still need improvement and we have tabled amendments for that purpose. We social democrats want to make it clear that one of the central problems is the outstanding overcapacity. It is a fact that environmental sustainability is a fundamental prerequisite for the economic survival of fishermen. Therefore, the environment must take priority.

A third important point concerns the external aspects of the CFP and the partnership agreements with third countries. We move that paragraph 121, which puts undue emphasis on the interests of European fisheries, should be deleted. We should behave outside European waters in just the same way as we do at home. This means promoting sustainability, human rights and democracy throughout the world and ensuring that the income from partnership agreements does not disappear into the coffers of corrupt dictatorships.

Finally, I would like to make one more fundamental point. European fisheries policy is a hot potato, because it involves so many powerful national interests. It will come as no surprise that these have led to heated debates within the groups in recent weeks. Fortunately, we have all succeeded in finding effective compromises. However, when it comes to the legislative process, we must focus more closely on this issue than we have today and come up with some common European solutions. We must leave the trivial problems of national greed to the Council.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). – Mr President, first of all let me welcome the Commissioner to the House in her first address to Parliament and wish her well during her term of office. Let me also congratulate our colleague, Mrs Neves for the preparation of this report.

(GA) The new common fisheries policy must have clearer, better objectives that accept ecological, economic and social principles. A radical rethink must be carried out and, of course, all stakeholders must take part.

We must manage fish stocks in a sustainable way. At the same time, however, it is important to ensure a viable and sustainable way of life for Europe's fishermen.

I am particularly concerned about fishermen operating inshore and from small coastal islands. Such small-scale fisheries are of extreme importance to the peripheral areas where there is no alternative social employment and I am heartened this morning when I listen to the Commissioner make reference to such fisheries.

The majority of boats fishing in these areas are less than 15 metres, catching fish and catching quantities that have no significant impact on the fish stocks and, of course, many of them are fishing non-quota species. Most importantly, there is no alternative source of employment for many of those people. This is why I have tabled an amendment which calls on the Commission to specifically recognise these remote communities.

Regionalisation and the introduction of the RACs (Regional Advisory Councils) have been successful so regionalisation management structures should create many positive effects, including increased responsibility on the part of the stakeholders and the establishment of a new common fisheries policy that will be more sensitive to local concerns.

With the operation of the Lisbon Treaty following the referendum in my own country last year, the European Parliament now has greater legislative responsibility. Again, the Commissioner has recognised this and I look forward to working with her.

In conclusion, I would hope that the key provisions of this report will be included in the substantial reforms in the future.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, our rapporteur said of the CFP that its original problems are still largely present. Well, I agree, and the 27 years of experience in Scotland of the CFP has been a bad

experience. If we want to move to a system of fisheries management which works, and I think that is what we all want to do, then we must be prepared to embrace a radically different approach.

The over-centralised, inflexible CFP has failed miserably and we must accept that. But we must do something about it. Conversely the Commission acknowledges that, up to now, local management within the 12-mile zone has generally been successful; there is a lesson there.

I have tabled amendments for which I seek support from colleagues. I seek in these amendments to delegate real powers to Europe's fishing nations; to encourage cooperation between fishing nations and stakeholders on a logical basis by sea basin; to encourage the incentivisation of sustainable management measures taken at national and local level and to recognise and maintain the historic rights and benefits accrued from the principle of relative stability.

I firmly believe that those who have most to gain from the successful conservation of fish stocks, that is, our fishing communities and fishing nations themselves, are best placed to make real decisions about management plans and to implement them for their fisheries, working together on a regional basis. More than just failing the fishing industry and the fish stocks, the CFP has actually contributed substantially to a downturn in public opinion about the EU as a whole, and that is also at stake. If we do not get this CFP reform right...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Struan Stevenson (ECR). – Mr President, first of all, let me congratulate the rapporteur, Mrs Patrão Neves, for the very hard work that she has done on this report. We have an opportunity today to make a difference and to change the direction of a policy that everyone agrees has been a dismal failure. But to effect that radical change, we must not repeat past mistakes.

No more micro-management from the centre, no more top-down regulation, no more one-size-fits-all approach to policy. Any reform of the CFP must include an end to the debacle of discards. It must involve the stakeholders in the day-to-day management of stocks. It must ensure fleet capacities brought into line with stock levels. We have to put sustainability and conservation at the heart of our agenda. We must end IUU fishing and ensure a decent livelihood for all of those working in the sector. If we can give real substance to the core values of the CFP to maintain jobs and to maintain fish stocks, we will have made real progress.

Anna Rosbach (EFD). – (DA) Mr President, a reform of our fisheries policy is long overdue. However, I would have liked it to be more ambitious – particularly as it concerns the future existence of viable fish stocks in our seas. It is extremely rare for me to say that I fully agree with the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, but in this case, I have to admit that I do. In fact, their amendments are both responsible and necessary for the future of our fishing industry.

My question to the Council and the Commission is one that our guests here today will surely not like, but it will be of crucial importance for the future. My question is how can we introduce an EU-wide ban on catching any fish and shellfish during their respective breeding periods? Everyone knows that every time just one cod is caught that is full of roe (in other words, fish eggs), we are catching all of the future generations of cod. This makes safeguarding stable cod stocks almost impossible, to name just one topical example.

I am pleased that the new Green Paper intends to focus to a much greater extent on coastal fisheries. This will not only benefit the environment, but will also help to safeguard local jobs. It is also good that the Green Paper attaches importance to sustainable aquaculture to enable us to avoid depleting the seas around the coasts of third countries. We should, likewise, stop fishing for exotic and endangered fish species simply because sushi has become fashionable.

Andrew Henry William Brons (NI). – Mr President, our party believes that preservation of fish stocks should be the responsibility of each Member State, whose fishermen would have sole access to its own country's waters.

However, we recognise that there is a Europe-wide, indeed worldwide, problem with overfishing and unsustainable fish stocks.

There must be a revision of the present policy under which fishermen must return excess and even undersized fish to the sea, even though they are dead or dying as the result of swim bladder damage by being brought too quickly to the surface.

New technology must come to the rescue. For example, one of my constituents, Jeff Stockdale from Hull, a former fisherman, has invented a revolutionary pot trap that would encourage fish to enter it in order to escape from the tidal flow, but it would allow small fish to escape and larger ones to be released before being brought to the surface, if that should be necessary to avoid exceeding one's quota.

I commend this invention to the Commission and indeed the whole world for consideration.

Alain Cadec (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, unlike some, I believe that the European Parliament's report on the Green Paper is a significant, indeed even essential, contribution to the development of the future common fisheries policy. It is a comprehensive report that addresses all aspects of this policy and, in particular, the protection of resources, a global approach to the management of fish stocks and decentralised governance. All of that seems to me to be both very relevant and very purposeful.

I wish to express, today in this House, France's satisfaction with regard to this contribution by Parliament, on which we have worked together, and I thank Mrs Patrão Neves for the work she has done. This report points out the need to increase scientific expertise in the fisheries sector so that the decisions that are taken are beyond dispute.

Yes, we must conserve resources and promote sustainable fishing, but let us be careful not to stigmatise a profession that has long understood that its survival depends on its compliance with the rules. Yes, we must evolve into a market economy. However, that does not mean that we have to abandon organised means of regulation. I especially welcome the compromises that have been reached as a result of our debates in committee.

Indeed, no explicit reference is made to transferable individual rights. This type of management is regarded by some as a management tool that fulfils the environmental, economic and social objectives of the sector. That is not a view I share. A European market that enjoys rights to unregulated production is not desirable today. It would give rise to uncontrollable speculation and a concentration of individual rights.

Indeed, while it will certainly be crucial to implement new management methods for industrial fisheries – I agree with my colleague, Mrs Fraga Estévez, in that regard – I remain convinced that too broad an application of this system would sound the death knell for our small-scale fisheries, to which we are very committed.

Mrs Damanaki, we are counting on you.

Kriton Arsenis (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr Martín Fragueiro, the current common fisheries policy has failed. Most fish stocks are collapsing. Eighty-eight per cent of fish stocks are being fished beyond the maximum sustainable yield. Thirty per cent of fish stocks are outside safe biological limits, meaning that they have little chance of recovery. Cod in the North Sea, which is being fished even before its reproductive age, is a typical example. The reform under discussion is therefore absolutely necessary.

Protection of fishermen depends on protection of catches. If we are to prevent European fisheries from collapsing, we must reduce fishing effort and the European fishing fleet. The ecological approach must be the driving force behind a new common fisheries policy and must be accompanied by long-term planning, participatory procedures and the application of the principle of prevention. This long-term approach to species conservation must also be applied in all our international fisheries agreements.

I call on you to adopt these basic principles, so that we can develop a decentralised and participatory system, in which decisions are taken at the lowest possible level, with the participation of fishermen and respect for the needs of marine ecosystems.

Britta Reimers (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, this is only one step on the long road to the reform of the common fisheries policy. I would like to thank the rapporteur for the report and our coordinator for doing such an efficient job.

I am in favour of fundamental reform of the common fisheries policy. However, if we lack the courage to do this, it is important to me that we retain the principle of relative stability. Furthermore, I would like to mention specifically the major problem represented by the greedy cormorants and the management plan that Parliament has already called for.

The fishing industry is of fundamental economic and cultural importance to our coastal regions. Therefore, achieving a balance between the economy and the environment is of great significance for me in the context of the forthcoming reform of the common fisheries policy.

Peter van Dalen (ECR). – (NL) Mr President, sustainability is a key concept in the Green Paper, and rightly so: sustainable in the sense of being both future-proof for fisheries and good for the environment. The objectives set by the European Commission are not new but, to date, Europe has not managed to achieve them. This further increases the urgency of the need for reform.

I support the drift of the Commission's solution: regionalisation. More scope must be given to the fisheries sector itself, whilst paying attention to environmental aspects. Current policy goes too far, is too detailed and is ineffective.

In addition, compliance with the rules is poor at present. The good are the victims of the bad. I am proud of the Dutch fishermen: they and their Danish counterparts are the only ones with their catch quotas in order. We must encourage the European fisheries sector to become more involved and to take more responsibility, in line with the Dutch model. I was pleased to find this in the Green Paper; it is the only way to a sustainable future for the fisheries sector.

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – (NL) The current fisheries policy is not working well enough; a dramatic change is needed to reverse the situation. This is the fairly strong wording with which the European Commission opens its Green Paper. This is remarkable. Not that I wish to argue with it; on the contrary.

Some say the main reason for the failure of the common fisheries policy (CFP) is not that the policy as such is wrong but that it is so poorly implemented and enforced. There are important lessons to be learned in this regard. Policy must lend itself to implementation, and so simplification is in order. That is why I am pleased with the direction the Commission is indicating: regionalisation, more involvement by the sector and, in particular, compliance with the rules.

The report on this Green Paper by my fellow Portuguese Member points out the large variations between the various fleets and fisheries; and rightly so. We cannot talk in generalised terms about *the* overcapacity or *the* overfishing or *the* lack of compliance. A regional, sector-specific approach calls for nuanced language in this respect. Last Saturday, in fact, I held intensive discussions with representatives of the sector, who told me that fishermen and scientists are cooperating more and more successfully. Indeed, this strikes me as an example of how things can be done. When fishermen are able to contribute their know-how and to help shape policy, this broadens the basis for the policy considerably, and will put us on the right track. Finally, I should like to offer the rapporteur sincere thanks for this excellent report.

Ioannis A. Tsoukalas (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, I, too, should like to welcome Commissioner Damanaki and, in particular, to thank Mrs Maria do Céu Patrão Neves for her exhaustive and exceptional work.

All the important things have already been said. I shall turn my attention to three points: firstly, overfishing. Overfishing is an undisputed fact. In fact, as Mr Arsenis said, it is currently estimated that 88% of stocks in European seas are threatened by overfishing, meaning that they are being fished at a level which prevents their recovery.

Chronic overfishing has resulted in smaller and smaller catches for European fisheries and lost jobs. Smaller and smaller fish are being caught, often before they reach reproductive age, and they are becoming more and more difficult to locate.

Secondly, Europe catches far fewer fish today than it did 15 years ago, approximately 25% less, while fishing effort and the cost of fishing have risen. However, when taking measures, we must not overreact, as this may bring about adverse results, given that, according to the specialists, although we have overfishing, we are not talking about collapsing stocks.

What we must not forget is that viability has three dimensions, which are also highlighted in the Neves report: the social dimension, the economic dimension and the ecological dimension. A fisheries policy which targets viable development must not revolve solely around fish; it must also focus on man.

Fish, man, cormorants and seals are competing systems in the same ecological environment.

Finally, I must emphasise that I, like numerous other fellow Members, are insisting on more research into fisheries. It is not my insistence; it is a reality which we must address within the framework of everything said by Mr Cadec.

Catherine Trautmann (S&D). – (FR) Presidents, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, may I thank all the rapporteurs for their excellent cooperation and for the huge task accomplished in spite of what were at times conflicting interests.

The first result of our efforts is that Parliament can now state the direction in which it intends to steer the future common fisheries policy.

The second result is that, during the negotiations, our priority was to ensure that this text responds to the concerns expressed by fishermen. We have succeeded in this: the provisions relating to transferable individual quotas have been withdrawn, and support for small-scale and coastal fishing has been maintained.

The third anticipated result is that the forthcoming document must result in a participative and bottom-up approach, that is to say, in consultation with all those involved in the sector. It must also incorporate those elements that are essential to the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, notably, the human and social dimension of the entire sector, which must be combined effectively with the promotion of sustainable fishing practices and with the conservation of the fish stock as part of an ecosystemic approach.

I would like to add that, if we want to succeed in an ambitious reform of the common fisheries policy, then we must devote a budget to it that matches our stated ambitions. Our political commitment will be judged according to the resources that we grant it. We expect the Commission ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr Martín Fragueiro, Mrs Damanaki, we need clear objectives, we need to be courageous and we need to avoid another failure; participation is therefore essential.

The fishing sector and the processing industry are those most interested in seeing sustainable fisheries, which is why they are involved in the preparation of the reform or are participating in it, for example, in the revision of a control regulation in 2009, which should have been drawn up in a more open manner. In order to fulfil the objectives of the reform, the answer is simple: ensure a sustainable and profitable sector and guarantee supply.

The other key words are regionalisation, responsibility, stability and justice: regionalisation, examining the special characteristics of each zone and type of fishing, differentiating between small-scale and industrial fishing; responsibility, focusing on good practices and previous efforts to reduce fishing capacity; stability, through long-term management plans based on increasingly reliable scientific activity; and justice, revising the COM and offering inspections and controls of third countries to promote sustainable behaviour in the sector. Justice, too, for the women of the sea, the eternal forgotten of this sector; without their contribution, fishing would be impossible in many areas.

Oldřich Vlasák (ECR). – (CS) I welcome the submission of the Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy. Just like the Czech Republic in the Council of Ministers, I support the endeavour to improve, simplify and make more effective the legislative framework regulating this area. The Commission's effort to adopt a multi-year approach towards the strategy for preserving fish stocks and to place greater emphasis on finding an appropriate compromise between fishing and the environment is particularly valuable.

We must regard the Green Paper as the first step towards reform in this area. I would be even more pleased to see a stronger emphasis on the area of aquaculture in future proposals. A revitalisation of both marine and freshwater aquaculture will help to support the development of coastal and rural areas and will also bring benefits to consumers in the form of environmentally friendly food products. From this perspective, I support all of the proposed amendments.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the fishing sector is of fundamental significance as a source of livelihood in European coastal regions and as a source of food for the citizens of Europe. Unfortunately, the common fisheries policy, in its present form, does not meet the challenges associated with the emergence of a number of problems, such as the uncontrolled exploitation of fishing grounds or excessive fishing capacity. A complete transformation of maritime policy is essential. We are at the beginning of this process, and it should end with thorough changes to the current, ineffective European fisheries policy.

Thank you, Mrs Patrão Neves, for your comprehensive report, which determines the essential measures on which this reform should be based. Firstly, a reduction in excess fishing capacity. This is a fundamental problem, which should be solved by the introduction and monitoring of appropriate market mechanisms.

I am talking here about a system of individual transferable quotas, or ITQs. I think this is a kind of economic medicine for adapting the size of the fleet to available resources and ensuring profitability of the fishing sector. Secondly, decentralisation and a broader inclusion of interested parties and advisory bodies in the process. The aim of this is to increase the involvement of fishermen and to develop detailed regulations, which would increase the trust between fishermen and the bodies which govern fishing.

The Green Paper rightly evaluates current fisheries policy, highlighting its many imperfections. Mrs Patrão Neves' report analyses the possibilities for solving the adverse situation of the fishing industry in Europe. However, the proposals do require further discussion. If this does not take place, our Community risks voting through another version of a reform, which will not solve the problems being faced by the European fishing industry.

Iliana Malinova Iotova (S&D). – (BG) This is the first time we are discussing the common fisheries policy since the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, fully aware of the great responsibilities we have as a result of Parliament's increased powers. There was a very heated debate on the Green Paper, and I sincerely wish to thank the rapporteurs for the work they have done.

I want to emphasise one particular aspect of the proposed reform which is of paramount importance to the whole sector's development. It must take into account how the situation has changed following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, as well as the new Member States. The existing system for carrying out research and analysis and for making decisions must take into account the new waterways and their specific features. I would like to emphasise on this point the need to focus particular attention on the Black Sea and create dedicated bodies for managing it. We must take into consideration the interests of the people living in these coastal areas, the ecological issues and the fishing industry. I am also mentioning this in connection with the forthcoming 2014-2020 financial framework during which this reform must be funded.

Finally, I do not think we should support the proposal to reduce fleet overcapacity, which could have adverse consequences on fisheries in the context of a severe financial and economic crisis.

Chris Davies (ALDE). – Mr President, I hope the Commissioner will take heart from the vote we had this month on bluefin tuna. I think it gave a good indication of the strength of feeling in the House and perhaps an indication also that you can count on many Members here to vote for quite radical reform.

Yesterday, many Members attended a seminar I organised, a presentation by the Marine Stewardship Council. I have always been rather fond of this organisation. It was set up about 10 years ago by a partnership between business and environmentalists, which, I think, is always good. It had a slow start, but by the end of this year, they reckon about 10% of the world's fisheries will be MSE-certified.

I think this gives credibility to the retailers who support the MSE. I think it gives confidence to consumers and I think that it not only puts more money in the pockets of fishermen who have got their fisheries sustainably certified, but it also gives them a sense of pride. They have a piece of paper that they can hold up to their families and their communities which demonstrates that their hard work of today is not damaging the prospects of fish stocks' survival in the future.

This is entirely complementary to everything the Commission does and I hope that the Commissioner will support its work during her period in office. It is setting a gold standard.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, can I thank the rapporteur for her very diligent and detailed work on this dossier.

Since the Lisbon Treaty has been passed, this House will face two major reforms on two policies: agriculture and fishing. The issues are similar. We all want the best for the sectors and we are trying to reform them in a way which will deliver the best possible outcomes.

I am a little concerned, and the rapporteur points to it in her explanatory statement, that in 2002, we were also full of good intentions but that reform failed the fishing sector and failed the sustainability criteria as well.

However, I am very heartened by her very practical approach to the problems: the three principles that we need to look at – the environmental, the social and the economic – and then the practices that are needed to implement those principles. It is about local and regional concerns and being conscious of the people who

are affected. I like, in particular, the idea that we could fish less and earn more. If we achieve that, we can perhaps do the same for agriculture.

Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos (S&D). – (PT) As various speakers have already said, the objective which we have been trying to achieve with the common fisheries policy, without success so far, is environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially worthwhile fishing. The Commission's Green Paper makes a good diagnosis of the situation in the sector and poses many questions, but it falls short when it comes to offering solutions. The report also lays out a large number of principles and jointly agreed routes. These will now need to be translated into concrete measures so that this objective can be achieved as soon as possible.

The efforts of the rapporteur need to be emphasised, namely her attempt to come up with measures, and particularly her willingness to accept compromises, which involved taking the most controversial issues out of her initial report. The Commission now has the enormous responsibility of presenting us with concrete steps in its legislative proposal that will allow the implementation of the principles contained in this report. I am certain that we will adopt the report by a large majority.

Antolín Sánchez Presedo (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, an important part of the future of Europe is at stake in the reform of the common fisheries policy.

The fishing sector is a resource and a way of life in our coastal areas, and forms the basis of our canning industry and marine research. It is crucial for safety, quality and price in the supply of food to our consumers. It is also crucial for external relations and development.

The reform must focus on responsible, sustainable and competitive fisheries. It must accentuate the social dimension, give priority to the ecosystem and be integrated in the marine policy.

It is important to ensure the conservation and recovery of stocks and to revise the principle of relative stability. The management policy based on TACs and quotas must leave room for effort-based management. It is also essential to step up controls and put an end to unfair competition.

The small-scale fishing fleet and the areas that are highly dependent on fisheries need to be treated differently and need greater socio-economic support. Shellfishing activities must be completely integrated into the common fisheries policy.

I support the report and I congratulate the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs on the compromises reached. I call on the Commission and on the Council Presidency to give the report serious consideration in their future work.

Ole Christensen (S&D). – (DA) Mr President, I think that the European common fisheries policy is important. However, it is also important for the fisheries policy to be supported by the citizens of Europe and by all of the interested parties within the fisheries sector. There is therefore no other option than to have greater regionalisation so that the responsibility for complying with the European framework and objectives is decentralised. The discarding of fish must be reduced to a minimum, but for this to be possible, the policy behind the discards must be changed. Illegal fishing must be stopped – it is very detrimental to law-abiding fishermen. There must be more stringent and uniform control in the Member States. Coastal fisheries must be enhanced to give smaller boats a special status. Out and back again the same day results in fresh fish, the fish get a good price and it is easy on the environment and on fish stocks. I hope that these elements will have a firm place in the final reform. That is what is needed.

Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to commend the rapporteur's comments on this Green Paper, which are along the right lines. The new strategy must promote fishing at local level, and I should like to point out that aquaculture is a significant part of this, as it accounts for a considerable amount of resources and tens of thousands of jobs. Europe needs an aquaculture that is strong, sustainable and of a high quality.

I should like, in particular, to draw your attention to shellfish breeding, which is subject to specific constraints requiring pragmatic and appropriate solutions. This type of breeding is often carried out by small-sized enterprises, which have been hit hard by the crisis. Pollution and environmental changes are resulting in an increasingly fragile and more unstable form of production. Producers are expecting Europe to provide them with substantial aid, that is to say, in the short term, with temporary financial assistance that will enable them to continue to earn a living from their production; in the medium term, with transitional aid to ensure that the species have the biological time they need to reproduce; and, in the long term ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D). – (PT) I should like to congratulate the rapporteur and the Azorean fishermen present here today. I also welcome this report as it represents an important change in relation to the current common fisheries policy and includes measures that are particularly relevant to the outermost regions, such as the distinction between small-scale and industrial fleets and the creation of bio-geographical regions. I also see the introduction of the amendments made by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament as positive, as they have moderated the rapporteur's initial position on the protection of individually transferable quotas, as advocated by the Azorean fishing organisations.

Similarly, we observed the amendments made by the S&D Group, advocating the principle of relative stability. We believe that for the outermost regions, further efforts should be made in creating bio-geographical regions, using them as a preferred management model, in line with the existing resources. In addition, in order to maintain good environmental conditions in marine areas and respect the precautionary principle, it is necessary to reassess the limit of 100 nautical miles around islands, as it is vital to reclaim 200 miles so that ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

George Lyon (ALDE). – Mr President, I, too, would like to begin by adding my congratulations to the rapporteur. The common fisheries policy is a discredited policy and this reform gives us an opportunity for a fresh start. It seems to me that, if the CFP is going to regain its credibility, it must first of all have at its heart sustainability; if there is no fish, there is no future for the industry. Secondly, stability and predictability for our fishing communities and our fishermen. Thirdly, tackling over-capacity; we must find a solution to over-capacity. Fourthly, recognising past efforts – most important. We also need a policy that comes up with a real solution to the problem of discards.

Fundamentally the reform of the CFP needs to provide a future for our fishing communities and our fishermen. Fundamentally it seems to me that the key in terms of the CFP...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE). – (ES) Mr President, I, too, would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the points that some of us believe should be fundamental in the final report on which we are going to vote.

These points include: the precautionary principle, which is fundamental and essential; reducing capacity, which is absolutely urgent; limiting the public subsidy policy; and improving controls and prosecuting, relentlessly and with a clear conscience, crimes committed by those who do things the wrong way and encourage others to do the same. However, we also need to promote sustainable gear and sustainable fishing, which means that we have to make progress on the definition of small-scale fishing, which is something that undoubtedly needs greater clarification.

I want to mention, too, the role of women and the recognition that their work deserves, an aspect on which we have also tabled amendments.

Finally, I believe that it is important to stress and call for greater coherence and responsibility in the fisheries agreements with third countries; the agreements with Morocco and Guinea, for example, demand this.

Werner Kuhn (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, firstly, I would like to wish the Commissioner, Mrs Damanaki, every success. We look forward to working with her. I would also like to thank Mrs Patrão Neves, who has done an excellent job of conducting the negotiations.

It is important that the countries with small fishing industries are also represented. As has already been mentioned, relative stability plays a decisive role for Germany. Of course, we are all convinced of the importance of protecting fish stocks and ensuring that they remain sustainable so that they stay at a level which will guarantee the existence of our fisheries in future. However, we must not only discuss the environmental and economic aspects. We must also consider the excessive protection given to some species, as has already been mentioned, such as cormorants and seals.

Europe's coastline is thousands of kilometres in length and has traditional small-scale fisheries in many areas. Many families depend on these fisheries for their livelihoods. Tourism also plays an important role in this

respect. We must take all of this into account. I believe that the Green Paper is a very good solution which will enable us to take things further with the Commission ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) The common fisheries policy has to reconcile ecological and environmental objectives with catch sizes, and also with matters of employment and the standard of living of fishing families. Fishing capacity should be adapted to the level of resources, levels which are established in accordance with the latest scientific and expert knowledge. Arriving at sustainable fishing quotas must take place in connection with the process of support for the fishing community in a variety of areas, such as investment, modernisation and social issues, including from a long-term perspective.

The common fisheries policy should take account of the specific conditions of different regions and seas. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the competences of the Regional Advisory Councils, which should work closely with the fisheries administrations of Member States and the European Commission. Finally, it is necessary to strengthen the organisation of fishermen and to improve the chain from catch to sale, with a view to quality and high standards of fish products.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, during my seven months as an MEP, I have never met more angry people than the fishermen and fisherwomen I have met in my constituency.

Clearly for them, the common fisheries policy has not worked. Therefore, the reform is most welcome. I think we all agree that we need to preserve fish stocks but we also need to preserve coastal communities, and the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There has to be a voice in favour of the small fisherman and small fisherwoman.

Also, as pointed out by Mr Brons, new technologies have to be brought on board, particularly the ones he referred to which can help with dispersals. That would make a huge difference.

And finally, the whole question of research has to be looked at. There is a tendency, once we hear about research or scientific evidence, to take it at face value. As Mr Cadec said, it must be incontestable, it must be objective and it must be up to date.

Juan Carlos Martín Fraguero, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) Mr President, I, too, would like to thank Mrs Patrão Neves for her work.

As regards the debates in the Council up to now, I should say that the ministers have unanimously supported the need for the reform, involving simplifying the rules, enhancing the role of the regions and decentralising decision making, except on strategic elements and principles, and they agree that it is essential to reduce discards, overcapacity and overfishing.

The specific points on which there is agreement so far are the following: maintaining the current rules on access to the 12 nautical mile zone; long-term resource management; greater involvement of fisheries professionals; market incentives – such as labelling and certificates – to stimulate fishermen's overall revenue share; use of subsidies solely as exceptional measures to reduce overcapacity; the importance of research in the fisheries policy; integration of aquaculture; the relationship between the CFP and the integrated maritime policy; and the need to maintain and enhance the European Union's action at international level.

To date, the debates have revealed differing positions on the following aspects: relative stability; the current system of TACs and quotas and the use of transferable quotas; limiting effort as a management tool; the methods to reduce discards, overcapacity and overfishing; global financing and its allocation; and the increase in support for small-scale fishing and coastal communities.

As I said in my initial speech, the Council has not yet adopted a position and it does not intend to adopt any formal decisions until next year, when the Commission has formally submitted its legislative proposals.

Finally, I, too, would like to welcome the representatives of the fisheries sector who are here with us today.

Maria Damanaki, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, I would like to thank all the Members for their contributions. Having so many speeches is very encouraging.

I understood that the word mentioned most was sustainability, so sustainability is a general agreement, a framework for general agreement. I cannot answer all the points that were raised but I would like to underline some priorities.

Small-scale fisheries and coastal regions are a priority. I would like to reassure all of you that I will take your contributions on this issue very seriously. I would also like to reassure you that I have no intention of introducing heavy measures and rules on hobby anglers.

Second priority: regionalisation. I would very much like to discuss with you in further detail exactly what we are doing to implement this principle, because here, we have a lot to talk about.

Transferable fishery rights: this is, I understand already, a very engaged debate with a lot of arguments. I do not know what will happen during the vote, but we cannot ignore this issue. A lot of Member States are implementing this system already. So what I propose is having a clear discussion, maybe within the Committee on Fisheries. Since this is not the end of the dialogue, we can have a clear discussion about ITQs – I see Mrs Fraga is here – we can organise a good discussion to understand the whole issue.

Just to mention some other priorities: a clear level playing field for the Mediterranean and the other areas as regards fishermen from other countries – this is correct; we have to do it to secure fair competition for our fishermen and fisherwomen; phasing out discards; labelling.

These are our priorities. I would like to end by underlining the need for a new form for fisheries agreements; a new form that will include a human rights clause. Thank you for your contributions. I think that this is not the end of the dialogue; this is the start of a very good debate between us.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, rapporteur. – (PT) I would like to thank all those who were present here today in Parliament, and who continue to give their valued support to this process, which is dragging on, and which, as the Commissioner has just said, we must pursue if our objectives are to be met.

In all honesty, we realise that it is impossible for a report to please everyone. Many will say that it did not go far enough in terms of certain aspects, while others will say that it has gone too far in other respects, or even the same ones. I think that right now, it is important to stress that with this report, we have succeeded in striking a good balance between the main issues, a broad consensus, and that overall, the report has the capacity and potential to make an adequate response to the needs, or should I say demands, of the sector.

Just as we worked in the Committee on Fisheries, chaired by Mrs Fraga Estévez, I hope that we can now carry on with this work within the committee and, on a wider scale, with the Council and the European Commission, so that we can make progress towards the work for the legislative proposals, which will be just as intensive.

I believe that if we continue to work in this way, with a sense of team spirit and the understanding that we need to consider all the issues that are important in different parts of the broad European Union, and if we try to respond effectively to all the needs of the fisheries sector across the large exclusive economic area, we will effectively be working for the sector. Given this, we commit ourselves to establishing the conditions whereby the fisheries sector is effectively sustainable and can develop in the long term.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 11.30.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Vito Bonsignore (PPE), in writing. – (IT) First and foremost, we congratulate the rapporteur, Mrs Patrão Neves, on the excellent work she has done up to now and on the positive outcome of the vote.

We hope that the Green Paper, which will arrive shortly in committee, is the prelude to the swift arrival in plenary of the White Paper. Europe has always taken an interest in the fisheries sector. We believe, however, that it is essential to provide for greater investment in scientific research, especially in the fisheries sector, including within the next framework programme. We also believe it is essential to improve knowledge in the sector of the rules through greater flexibility of the quota system and increased responsibility in relation to control and stocks.

We also want stronger partnerships with third countries in order to combat illegal fishing, and a greater degree of cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean, so that we may regulate more decisively fishing in a sea such as the Mediterranean, which has always been the cradle of different civilisations and cultures.

Lastly, we agree with the provisions of paragraph 23 on modernisation, especially of the small-scale fleet, although we would like more details on this matter. With regard to paragraphs 62 and 63 on professional

qualifications for operators in the sector, we would like further clarification, especially as regards small-scale fishing, which would end up being penalised the most if the rules on fleet management were made tougher.

Nessa Childers (S&D), in writing. – While recreational angling constitutes just a small catch percentage of Europe's fishing industry, it is an integral economic and social element of many parts of the EU, particularly Ireland East. Angling has a long and important heritage in the east of Ireland, with scenes of anglers at rivers such as the Slaney or on the shores of the east coast a popular depiction of Irish culture. This reputation for angling also has a vital impact on tourism in many parts of Ireland, both from within Ireland and internationally, with Tiger Woods one famous regular patron of the Liffey in County Kildare. As a result of falling stocks of fish, there is a move to impose controls on shore angling and to deduct these catches from the quotas of the commercial fishing industry.

These proposals could have a serious effect on tourist earnings from angling, and also have a negative cultural impact on many parts of Ireland. It is therefore necessary for this House to recognise recreational angling in all its forms as an important stakeholder in the fishing industry, and for the reformed common fisheries policy to take its economic and social benefits into account in its White Paper.

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) The report on the Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy has the aim of initiating a public debate in EU and Member State institutions. The fisheries policy, just like the common agricultural policy, is a strategic agenda which directly influences all citizens of the EU, and which must be resolved in accordance with the three core principles, which are the economic profitability of fishing, the preservation and maintenance of fish stocks and the maintenance of an acceptable standard of living for persons engaged in fishing. Unless there is a balance between all of these principles in the draft legislation, there will be a risk of economic decline in the coastal regions, of certain fish species being fished out or of increases in illegal fishing above the limits. In view of the fact that 88% of the fish population is fished beyond maximum sustainable levels and that up to 80% of the total catch is discarded, there is a need to set limits that will allow fish populations to regenerate, thereby increasing fish catches dramatically in the future, while maintaining sustainability. The rapporteur correctly points out that, as a result of the equilibrium between producers and buyers being disrupted through the entry of an intermediary – the retail chains – fish prices are falling, which puts the situation in the fishing sector even more at risk. The submitted report takes account of all three previously mentioned core principles of fishing and puts forward specific solutions for sustainability, and it is therefore a good start to the preservation of fishing for all of us.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I would like to congratulate Mrs Patrão Neves on her work and on the report that has now been voted upon. The topic of fisheries is obviously a sensitive issue for the Portuguese, as we have several fishing communities, and it is an absolutely crucial issue for the Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party (CDS-PP).

I believe that we need a new common fisheries policy (CFP) regulation that is more efficient and better tailored to the situation in the respective territories. I therefore welcome the intention to focus on the principles of regionalisation and subsidiarity, thus giving greater autonomy to the Member States and allowing more flexibility for the CFP. At the same time, given that environmental challenges cause serious problems for fishery resources, I believe that it is crucial for the new CFP to allow ecologically sustainable and economically viable fishing. We are not indifferent to the problems faced by fishermen, and we recommend that the new CFP provides adequate protection for the fishing capacity of communities that are dependent on fishing.

I also think it is vital that the new CFP ensures the quality of fish, and in sufficient quantities for people to maintain a fish-rich diet, which we now know to be well balanced and beneficial for a healthy life.

I will be following the future reform of the CFP with interest and particular attention, and I will always defend Portuguese interests in this strategic sector.

Alan Kelly (S&D), in writing. – On a practical level I welcome the proposed developments for the long-term protection of marine resources, for both environmental and economic purposes; the updating of fishing technologies, and the emphasis it places on the need for professional qualifications within the sector. In particular, I am pleased with the recommendation that any mandatory changes be introduced gradually and requiring an initial transitional period, in order to allow sufficient time for the industry, and especially individual fishermen, to cope with the extra expense in an already difficult industry. However, although I acknowledge that the report outlines the difference in treatment to be afforded to high-sea fisheries and smaller-scale fisheries, it is lamentable that any more expense be imposed upon the latter particularly. Fishing is not just an economic activity, it is both social and cultural, and the way of life of the small fisherman needs to be preserved. Their livelihood has, up until now, depended on the historic claim his local community held

on its coast's fishing rights. In light of this, we should not lose sight of the promise made in the report, 'to guarantee (people living from fishing) an equitable standard of living.'

James Nicholson (ECR), in writing. – It is now widely accepted that the 2002 reform of the common fisheries policy has failed miserably and the situation in the fishing industry continues to deteriorate rather than get better. The CFP has become a bureaucratic nightmare with over regulation and micro-management plaguing the industry while achieving little in the way of positive outcomes. The imminent reform of the CFP presents an opportunity to take the policy in a new direction, away from excessive bureaucracy, and deliver on all the aspects which it should – environmentally, socially and economically. The core goal of a reformed CFP must be to ensure that fishermen can earn a decent livelihood while also achieving environmental sustainability. The challenge is to formulate a common fisheries policy which maintains jobs and fish stocks at the same time. A reformed CFP should do away with centralised overregulation from Brussels and instead focus on ideas such as how stakeholders can deal with the day to day management of stocks locally.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), in writing. – (PL) The Green Paper on the common fisheries policy tears to shreds both the European Commission and the Member States. It is emphatic proof that not all projects and reforms carried out within the Union are successful. We should, therefore, draw the right conclusions with regard to both institutional and practical solutions.

One of the fundamental mistakes of the 2002 reform was excessive centralisation. The diversity and specific nature of different regions of the European Union should oblige us to regionalise. The European Commission must not treat the Baltic Sea on a par with the Atlantic or the Mediterranean Sea. Regionalisation of fisheries policy should go hand in hand with specific measures relating to social and economic matters. From the point of view of the people who live in areas which are dependent on fishing, the most important course of action is economic and social diversification and restructuring, including the creation of new jobs outwith the fishing sector. The fact that it is not possible to increase catches and employment in the Baltic fishing sector should lead to the above measures being put into effect. This is something which meets social expectations and needs.

Research shows that two-thirds of European fish stocks are under threat, including very well-known species such as sole, plaice and cod. Analyses carried out by the WWF say openly that if specific changes are not introduced, the breeding population of Mediterranean tuna and many other species will disappear by 2012.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), in writing. – (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, for decades now, the European Union's common fisheries policy has controlled fishing within the Community and in the territorial waters of third countries.

Unfortunately, it is one of the EU's most unsuccessful policy areas, and has led to a situation that could be described as a crisis, and for good reason. The situation regarding fish stocks is extremely worrying: two thirds of the EU's commercially exploitable fish stocks have plummeted. Falling profitability and hugely depleted shoals mean that the fishing industry is in big trouble. Excessive fishing quotas and illegal fishing are wiping out fish stocks at an alarming rate.

The crisis is due to the fact that, for a long time now, there has been complete indifference to the problems that have accumulated owing to overfishing and illegal fishing. Furthermore, destructive fishing methods are also devastating the rest of the marine environment. Bottom trawling is one of the most harmful methods.

The EU must take the crisis in fish stocks seriously. There is also a close link here to the external perspective, because the Union imports almost a third of the fish it sells from outside. A crucial component of the new common fisheries policy will be to put the agreements we have with our fishing partners on a more sustainable basis. The key reforms must be to tackle overcapacity with respect to fishing vessels and more effective monitoring to root out illegal fishing.

The main building blocks of the reform of the fisheries policy, as proposed by the Commission in its Green Paper, must be making the ecosystem the starting point, and the precautionary principle. The main focus of the policy must be the genuinely sustainable fishing of each fish species, and to accomplish this, each nation needs to have its own management and protection strategy. If necessary, the Union must also be prepared to adopt solutions to ensure the recovery of stocks by introducing a complete ban on fishing and the trade in fish.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP) is an opportunity to review this European policy in its various aspects (economic, social and environmental),

redefining new approaches aimed at resolving the problems that persist in this sector. The reform of the CFP has particular emphasis on the outermost regions, where fisheries are extremely important to local development and people's livelihoods.

The report on the Green Paper insists on reforms that I believe to be necessary for better implementation of this policy on a regional level, particularly decentralisation of fisheries management to take account of the specific features of each region and to link in the sustainability of the sector through the preservation of species. In Madeira, there is an urgent need to modernise boats and to promote measures to ensure the economic viability of fishing. I would reiterate that greater efficiency in the management of fishery resources and a financial support strategy for workers in this sector are essential priorities within this reform, and they must be implemented at a regional level.

The reform of the common fisheries policy marks a new stage in the development of the sector, with more active participation by all those involved at a national, regional and industry level.

5. Railway safety, including the European signalling system (debate)

President. – The next item is the Commission statement on railway safety, including the European signalling system.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, the train accident in Buizingen on Monday, 15 February 2010 was a shocking tragedy. I understand that in the aftermath of this serious accident, several technical and political questions concerning rail safety can be asked.

First of all, my thoughts are with the victims of this tragedy and their relatives. It is always difficult to find words of consolation for these sad occasions and silence is sometimes more telling. The causes of the accident are not yet fully known and the technical investigation has been launched in accordance with the provisions of the EU Safety Directive.

It is the responsibility of the Belgian investigation body to carry this out. It should be accomplished independently of any judicial inquiry. The objective of the technical investigation is not to apportion blame and liability, but rather to identify causes with a view to improving railway safety and the prevention of accidents.

The Belgian investigation body has asked the European Railway Agency to support it in its investigation. Two investigators from the agency joined the Belgian team in charge of the investigation just a few hours after the accident occurred.

I would like to stress that, since the causes of the accident have not yet been clarified, it is inappropriate to draw conclusions. Of course, I am prepared to clarify some issues, which were raised in the aftermath of this tragedy, and I will share with you my understanding of the situation.

As is too often the case when rail accidents happen, remarks alleging a link between European rules or regulations and the accident are made. I would first like to be very clear on the opening-up of the market. Alongside the opening-up of the rail freight sector to competition and the establishment of requirements to separate the activities of infrastructure managers and railway undertakings, a stringent regulatory framework has been introduced governing rail safety and interoperability. We want to ensure that the high level of rail safety is maintained, while recognising the procedures and methods specific to each Member State in this area.

The European Railway Agency produces reports at regular intervals on the safety of the European network and monitors the development of the situation in the Member States.

Indicators demonstrate that the opening up of the rail sector to competition has in no way had a negative impact on railway safety. Let me say very clearly that any proposition linking rail safety levels to the opening-up of the rail market is, in my view, just an excuse to steer the debate away from the true causes of the accident.

The question of the coexistence of national and European train control systems can be put in these terms. More than 20 different national systems are used in Europe today to ensure the safe movement of trains. These systems developed at national level consist of a trackside component and an onboard component. The trackside component sends information to a computer in the train, and the computer applies the brakes when a dangerous situation is detected.

For the systems to work, trains and lines must therefore be equipped with a compatible system. Levels of safety and performance of the various national automatic train protection systems are different, as are the rules concerning equipment of lines and locomotives in these national systems.

The incompatibility of the different national systems poses a major problem for international trains because either locomotives have to be changed at each border or they have to be equipped with as many onboard systems as there are systems on the tracks that they will run on. There are even cases where different national systems coexist in one single country. The Thalys, for example, has to be equipped with seven different national systems to run in four countries.

For this reason, a single system for use at European level has been designed and developed and is currently being installed on major international lines and trains in Europe. The system is known as ERTMS – European Rail Traffic Management System.

As regards the timing, we can say that most of the national systems were developed in the early 1980s but their deployment is a long and costly process. In most countries, only part of the national networks and locomotives are equipped today and this partial equipment took approximately 20 years.

The ERTMS specifications have been available since 2000. A number of pilot projects were carried out between 2000 and 2005. Since 2005, several ERTMS-equipped lines have been put into service. At present, 10 Member States have lines with ERTMS and there are ongoing projects in almost all Member States. In Belgium, for example, the line between Aachen and Liège is equipped, and ICT trains running on this line are equipped as well.

ERTMS was created primarily with a view to promoting interoperability. That means the possibility for locomotives to cross borders, but it is also recognised as a system offering an advantage in terms of increased safety. The system is fully operational today but, due to the long time needed to install it on board trains and the long lines, existing national systems will continue to coexist with ERTMS along the lines.

Third countries like Taiwan, to give just one example, have also chosen ERTMS, and not just for operability reasons. Taiwan invested in ERTMS simply because the system is the best system available on the market today.

Several questions were asked about comparing the situation between Member States. It is quite difficult and not very useful to establish a ranking of the Member States and make meaningful comparisons. It all depends on the choice of indicators, the reference period and the quality of the data reported. One or two serious accidents can also have a significant impact on whatever type of ranking we may have.

Overall data show that the Belgian performance is average. It is true, however, that Belgium lags behind the European average in terms of tracks equipped with an automatic train protection system, be it the national or the European one.

Mathieu Grosch, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Mr Kallas, I would like to thank you for your explanations. Against the background of the accident in Buizingen it is, of course, important for us to show respect towards the victims and also towards the investigation. For this reason, we must not jump to conclusions about the accident and, more significantly, we must not begin assigning blame.

I felt that the Commission acted correctly in strongly rejecting the accusation by the Belgian National Railways that the European Rail Traffic Management System has taken too long to develop. We know that safety remains a national priority and that this will continue to be the case. At a European level, we – and this includes both the Commission and Parliament – have always regretted the fact that the rail companies do not give higher priority to safety and to interoperability between the different systems in Europe.

After accidents have occurred, new proposals are often made in a political context. I must say that in this case, everything was in place, both the legislation and the technology. The only thing which perhaps was lacking was the will to make the technology a high priority. Since the middle of the 1990s, the technology has been available to enable the safe transition between the European system and the advanced Belgian system, in other words, the so-called TBL 1+ system. There has been no lack of time or of technical facilities.

The future is what is important to me and I would like to emphasise the following points. Firstly, we must not, under any circumstances, cut back on training in the rail industry. That has not been, nor will it be, one of the EU's obligations. The railways have highly skilled staff and this must remain the case in future.

Secondly, we need definite, binding conversion plans from the rail companies and the countries. Leaving everything to goodwill is no longer sufficient. We need a precise timetable and we will soon have the opportunity in Parliament to find out about specific objectives.

My third proposal is that passengers should also have the right to know whether the stretch of track and the rolling stock that they travel on meet the highest safety standards. This is the minimum level of information which must be made available to passengers in future. We also need to investigate how we can put in place a mandatory requirement to do this.

Saïd El Khadraoui, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (NL) To begin with, speaking on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, I, too, wish to express my heartfelt sympathy for the victims of the Buizingen rail disaster and their families and friends.

We do have to await the results of the investigation before drawing real, detailed conclusions, of course, but that does not change the fact that railway safety must remain a permanent area of attention at all levels, including the European level, and that we must therefore evaluate, improve, supplement and adjust safety policy on a regular basis. I should like to join my fellow Member and also you, Commissioner, in making quite clear our regret that a number of individuals with significant responsibilities in Belgium have sought to pass responsibility for the accident on to Europe or have at least given that impression. The delay in the development of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) has been cited in particular as a reason why now, in 2010, only a handful of locomotives in Belgium are equipped with the automatic stop system.

Ladies and gentlemen, on the other hand, let us make one thing clear, and let us be frank about this: the development of this good idea – a single signalling system to replace the 20 separate systems – has taken longer than hoped or expected. This, of course, is attributable to the technical complexity and to the fact that agreement on a standard has to be reached among a very large number of countries, namely 27, although at the time, there were a couple fewer. Of course, there are also associated budgetary consequences. Yet, as you rightly said, this has not stopped a single Member State from developing its own system or starting to use a kind of embryonic version of ERTMS at an early stage.

I take the view that we do need to look ahead now and ask ourselves how we can contribute to safer railways. I believe we can make this contribution on several fronts at European level, too. We can do so, firstly, thanks to the further development of ERTMS. Such a development plan exists. In 2009, we earmarked EUR 240 million from the budget for trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) in order to help Member States out with this.

Secondly, however, and I think that this is an important task for the Commission and the European Railway Agency, we must also monitor whether existing European safety legislation is being implemented in practice in the field. I would cite the example of Directive 2004/49/EC on safety on the Community's railways. This lays down, among other things, that a safety authority is to be established in each Member State, which must be independent from the railway undertakings and the infrastructure manager, and whose tasks include monitoring, encouraging and enforcing railway safety and developing a regulatory framework. I have the feeling, ladies and gentlemen, that this is not working particularly well in Belgium, and I think that you should organise a kind of audit to look into whether Member States do indeed have the capacity to guarantee this safety proactively in their national rail systems. That is a task I should like to entrust to you.

Dirk Sterckx, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (NL) I, too, wish to express my sympathy for the victims on behalf of my group, and I, too, wish to await the results of the investigation, of course. I hope this is carried out as quickly as possible, but also as thoroughly as possible.

In my country, a number of questions have been raised as to the nature of Europe's approach to the railways. I have to be honest with you: I am shocked that some people have accused us of neglecting safety. I was Parliament's rapporteur on the Railway Safety Directive to which Mr El Khadraoui has just referred, and I am proud of the work we did back then. We told ourselves that we needed to be very demanding as regards safety in all Member States and we needed to establish a European framework for this and to lay down requirements. We got this past the Member States with very great difficulty. I note – and Mr El Khadraoui rightly mentioned this – that in some countries, unfortunately, including my own, the implementation of this directive at national level is in fact poorly organised. I hope you take another good look at this, Commissioner. Perhaps this House, too, should take another look at the directive and tighten up the framework, as Mr Grosch said. It is not true that we are neglecting safety, therefore; the reverse is true.

Secondly, the Regulation on passengers' rights contains a paragraph we hoped would never be needed: it concerns advance payments for people killed or injured in rail accidents. I welcome the announcement by the National Railway Company of Belgium (SNCB) that it will be using this system and making advance payments. Indeed, there was a time when this would not have been so.

Some people have said that opening up the market has made the railways unsafe. I wish to contradict this in the strongest terms. It is not true, as a look at the latest European Railway Agency data, from 2008, will demonstrate. The best-performing countries in 2008 were the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, two countries that have opened up their markets.

I also think attention should be paid to the people, to the railway workers on the ground: train drivers, station staff, administrators. We should be taking another look at their situation and ensuring that safety is the prime consideration in not only their training but also the organisation of their work and the whole corporate culture. By way of conclusion, Mr President, I should like to say that we must not lose sight of the fact that the railways are still among the safest means of transport around.

Isabelle Durant, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, I, too, believe that last week's tragic accident is the worst rail disaster to have hit Belgium since 2001, when I myself held the post of Minister for Mobility and Transport. Once again, of course, my thoughts are with our colleague, Claudia Candeago, and also with all the other victims of this tragedy, their loved ones, and all the grieving railway workers.

I shall refrain from drawing any conclusions, just as those who have spoken before me have done. The investigation is under way, and we shall not speculate on its results. However, it is clear that, in Belgium's case, it is regrettable that the railways should have taken so long to equip themselves with an automatic train protection system, as some have already mentioned. When I heard, in the wake of the disaster, that, whilst budgetary reasons could not be cited, the delays in the development of European interoperability standards were being called into question as a means of explaining this accident, I found it unacceptable and I immediately felt that Europe was at the centre of groundless accusations.

The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) does, in fact, offer companies an opportunity to invest in safety in a coordinated and interoperable manner. We must rid ourselves of the countless national standards that curb development and competitiveness, at a time when the European Train Control System (ETCS) is evolving. It is, of course, evolving, and it will continue to evolve. This is what it takes to preserve a very high level of technology. Moreover, I have no doubt that, in the next five or 10 years, there will be many more developments to come.

It must be said that such accidents, however exceptional, remind us that there is always room for improvement where safety is concerned, and I would like to make some proposals in this regard.

Firstly, as you know, Commissioner, we are currently discussing trans-European transport networks, their conditions and their criteria. I believe that, when it comes to the European networks, deployment of the ERTMS throughout Europe could actually become a priority. I also believe that, in this context, we should set deadlines concerning, in particular, the resources with which every single country and network will have to be equipped.

Lastly, I believe that we must prioritise safety over liberalisation of the markets by obliging new operators running trains on various national networks to adapt a while longer to the automatic protection system that exists on these networks and thus to equip their trains with the relevant receivers and cabin equipment.

To conclude, I believe that the European Railway Agency could, for its part, also provide invaluable support for a more effective integration of the national safety authorities. Such integration would make it possible, for example, for the equipment to be type-approved.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Derk Jan Eppink, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (NL) The investigation into the causes of the rail accident in Buizingen has yet to be completed, and so I cannot comment on it, but I have come to the following conclusion. When there is a train crash in the United Kingdom, people are quick to attribute it to the privatisation of the railways. The Belgian railways (SNCB) receive relatively the highest subsidy in the whole of the European Union. Belgium gives 32 euro cents per passenger/kilometre to its railways. France comes second with 24 euro cents. The Netherlands gives 15 euro cents and the UK 4 euro cents. Despite all these subsidies, the SNCB still has debts of EUR 10 billion. Where does the money go?

When I look at the infrastructure of the SNCB, the neglect is striking. Everything is old and worn out. Could it be that the safety system is also neglected from time to time? Perhaps too much money is being channelled to staff pay owing to the power of the trade unions. In Belgium, the railways are a socialist domain and are badly run. Indeed, these are questions that need to be asked, as the SNCB can hardly use lack of money as an excuse!

Jacky Hénin, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (FR) Mr President, when, in November, Mr Simpson declared in this House: ‘even though the European rail system is very safe and progress has been made over the last few years thanks to the liberalisation of the market’, I nearly choked. Nevertheless, he followed this up with: ‘recent fatal accidents have raised questions with regard to safety’.

Since the Buizingen accident, its terrible human death toll and the serious physical and psychological suffering that it has caused have served as a powerful reminder that it is high time we launched a serious debate on rail safety. Let us dismiss straight away the idea that all accidents are, by nature, unforeseeable. The main factor in the lack of safety across Europe’s rail networks is a direct consequence of the separation between the management of our rail infrastructure and the management of our rolling stock. This separation – it must be said forcefully here – has been imposed by the Commission against the better judgment of railway workers so that the rail sector can be opened up to competition. It greatly increases the likelihood of accidents. Because of this separation, the maintenance of the European rail network is being sacrificed for the sake of the highest profits. You may try to buy some time by proposing the use of the best modern-day techniques as the only option for solving the problems. Ultimately, however, it is a different rail policy that we need in Europe. If, each year, there are fewer railway workers, less maintenance, less investment and less training, it is inevitable that we will have to address the issue of accidents once again and pay mournful tributes. In order to ensure genuine rail safety, the Union has to turn the page on competition so as to open that of cooperation.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, upon leaving this debate, none of us will be able to ignore our responsibilities any longer. For my part, I refuse to be a party to malicious intent. Without change ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Philip Claeys (NI). – (NL) I should like to start by simply noting that the Belgian tax burden is one of the world’s highest, yet in that ungovernable country, the taxpayers – particularly those in Flanders – obtain very little in return for their money. The rail system is a perfect illustration of this. It is hopelessly outdated and is characterised by frequent and long delays and by overcrowded carriages during peak hours.

The management of the Belgian railways (SNCB) is highly politicised and inefficient, and a typical feature of Belgian politics is that, when something goes wrong, no one is ever responsible for anything at all. In 2001, a train crash occurred in Pérot that was similar to last week’s in Buizingen. Nine years ago, everyone thought serious action would be taken to improve the safety system; yet this did not happen. Pending the introduction of the European Train Control System (ETCS), Belgium developed its own system, but this came far too late and was extremely inadequate.

The lesson we must learn from this is that more needs to be invested in safety and that the various existing systems need to be better geared to one another. Then, if effective interoperability proves impossible to achieve, maximum encouragement must be given to the changeover to the European ETCS, as it is not healthy for a Thalys train running between Paris and Amsterdam, for example, to have no less than seven different safety systems.

Werner Kuhn (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the collision between two commuter trains in Brussels, which resulted in this dreadful accident, has deeply shocked all of us. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims.

After disasters of this kind, people’s first response is often to find someone to blame. However, the European Union, the Commission and the safety provisions which we introduced in Directive 2004/49 must not be made into the scapegoat in this case. On the other hand, the important question is, of course, whether we should tighten up the safety provisions. The investigations into this rail accident have not yet been completed and, therefore, we cannot yet expect any clear results. The major question that we must ask ourselves is whether it would have been possible to avoid this accident. We cannot exclude human error or technical failures and therefore both of these things play a role in rail safety. All rail operators, both state-owned and private, have an obligation to provide the necessary level of safety. The national rail companies must ensure that they are complying with the appropriate safety standards.

I do not want to give any lectures from a German point of view in this situation. I simply want to say that in Germany, we have attempted to implement the directive in its entirety. Wherever there is the possibility of human error, technical systems must be able to intervene. I remember the dead man's handle which automatically applied the brakes if the handle was not pressed for a minute. If a train passes a red stop signal, the brakes are also automatically applied. We must have systems of this kind in place. The European Train Control System must be implemented so that we have some influence over these things from the outside.

The members of the Committee on Transport and Tourism will work together to carry out the necessary evaluations and also to draw the necessary conclusions with regard to the safety provisions.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, the rail disaster in Buizingen, near Brussels, has claimed 18 victims and left more than 160 injured. Obviously, our thoughts are first and foremost with the families. The causes of the accident are still unknown – an investigation is under way – and we must think about undertaking an assessment of rail safety in Europe, on a Member State-by-Member State basis.

This assessment must focus, of course, on the safety systems, on the state of their application, on their interoperability and on their effectiveness. However, this assessment of the level of safety of the European rail networks must be understood in a broad sense and, in particular, must incorporate an assessment of the working conditions of railway employees, since the latter are the best guarantors of safety.

I therefore call on the Commission to undertake an assessment of the safety of Europe's rail networks by means of a global approach that takes the launch of the rail liberalisation process as its starting point. One thing is clear: the time has come to carry out a taboo-free assessment of the practical results of these policies aimed at liberalising and dismantling public services. What added value have they brought? Who has benefited from them? Who has suffered because of them?

The aim is to compare the implementation of the European safety and signalling standards with working conditions from the moment when this liberalisation of the rail sector within each Member States came into effect. The Commission must therefore consider the role of public services in more general terms. The *Parti Socialiste* – the party to which I belong – has long been calling for positive action from the European Union to protect and develop public services. This is the idea behind the introduction of a framework directive on services of general interest. The latter would guarantee public services a stable legislative framework and adequate funding in compliance with the principles of universality and equality of access.

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

Derk Jan Eppink (ECR). – (NL) I should like to put a question to Mr Tarabella, whom I otherwise hold in high personal regard. Surely he cannot disregard the fact that the Belgian railways (SNCB) receive the highest subsidy in Europe? He cannot blame liberalisation, therefore, as passenger transport has not been liberalised, nor can he come up with all kinds of other excuses.

I should also point out that he speaks on behalf of the Belgian francophone Socialist Party (PS), the party that has a good deal of control over the SNCB via the trade unions. If the politicised rail system ran the railways better, these things would not happen.

Marc Tarabella (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, all I would say in response to Mr Eppink is that this is not an electoral platform. A disaster has occurred and has claimed victims – others have occurred in the past – and it is only natural that one should question its causes. The investigations are under way; they must be allowed to run their course.

However, there is one factor that must never be ignored, and that is the human factor. In any liberalisation – I know that you support liberalisation, I support it far less, and indeed I oppose it where public services are concerned – the human factor is overlooked. Terrible pressure is put on members of staff, who work for hours on end or, in any case, for longer periods of time and without rest. As a train driver, one is responsible for passenger safety. Therefore, I believe it is important to ask about working conditions and any changes in those conditions. I believe that this is an important point.

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, the appalling train crash near Halle was a dreadful tragedy for the victims, their families, work colleagues and friends. The important thing now is to draw the necessary lessons from this tragedy, to avoid future casualties. In this, it is crucial that the voice of railway workers is clearly heard and heeded in making rail travel safe for both workers and passengers.

It is indeed outrageous to hear a British Tory, I take it, a Member of this Parliament, malign and slander Belgian railway workers in the course of his contribution when it is quite clear that the policies of neoliberalisation and deregulation have done enormous damage to our railway system as a public facility. There is, in fact, enormous frustration among Belgian railway workers. This was clear from spontaneous strikes among those workers in the days after this tragedy, in response to it. This is the third serious incident in Belgium in nine months.

After a previous tragedy in Belgium in 2001, comprehensive safety measures were promised but have not been implemented. The reality is that workers on the Belgian railways are under continuous pressure to work longer, with journeys being extended and fewer breaks, which means less safety. Of course, the perfidious policy of the EU Commission of liberalisation and privatisation will threaten safety further. It means that the profits of major transport companies come first. It is clear that the best structure to guarantee safety is to maintain the rail infrastructure in public ownership with democratic control and necessary investment.

Georges Bach (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I would also like to express my condolences to the families involved. However, it will be of little consolation to those affected – the mourning families and the seriously injured – if we continue to emphasise that the railway is the safest form of transport and that the number of accidents is very low compared with those on the roads.

Of course, the question of the circumstances arises. How could a disaster of this kind occur? However, as has already been said, this question must be dealt with by the technical experts and later by the courts. The question we have to answer is as follows: what has gone wrong in the process of creating a common European rail market? And secondly, how can we prevent further accidents using all the means available to us? Every accident is one too many.

As a former railway employee, I have experienced the changes myself. I would like to mention some of the problems which, to a certain extent, have an impact on safety. At the beginning of the 1990s, instead of introducing competition on the railways, we should first have started a process of technical harmonisation. We should have overcome all the problems that Mr Kallas mentioned in the 1990s. We should only have opened up the market to competition on the basis of technical harmonisation. The fragmentation of the companies has resulted in many players being involved in the rail system and this is a system which only functions properly when it is operated as a single entity. Therefore, in my opinion, the Member States, the rail companies, the infrastructure operators and also the Commission, which, as has already been said, introduced directives and regulations without carrying out an interim evaluation, share the responsibility for the most recent accidents. The evaluation was only completed a short time ago. The rail companies have made the mistake of choosing the wrong strategy and of waiting too long for a European system. They have constantly attempted to reduce costs, have employed staff without the necessary level of skills, as already mentioned, and they have also invested too little.

There are three points that I would like to highlight. The funding must be increased immediately in order to speed up the planned modernisation programme.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) In general, rail transport is safer, faster and causes less pollution than road transport. However, in 2007, roughly 2 600 people were victims of rail accidents, while last year, more rail accidents occurred involving passenger and freight trains.

The recent rail accident in Belgium, with a casualty list of 20 dead and more than 120 injured, refocuses our attention in a shocking way on the importance of rail transport safety. Unfortunately, the economic and financial crisis has exacerbated the financial difficulties facing both operators and administrators involved in the rail transport infrastructure. It is a major concern that the lack of specialist staff and financial resources for implementing the ERTMS is one of the possible causes of the accident, while thousands of rail workers are losing their jobs. I call on Member States and the Commission to take the necessary measures in order to:

1. modernise the rail infrastructure and existing rolling stock to guarantee efficient and safe rail transport,
2. give priority to the investments required for rail transport safety and security, and
3. develop new rail transport infrastructures and implement the ERTMS.

Antonio Cancian (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the recent rail disasters that have rocked Europe – in Belgium today, in Italy yesterday – oblige us to consider the flaws in the system and the measures suitable for improving the services in safety terms.

For example, it is astonishing to think that the European Union launched an appropriate system for monitoring rail traffic – the ERTMS – back in 2000, and that, in spite of this, 10 years later, the system has been adopted by only a very few Member States.

Even today, there are more than 20 different rail safety systems on EU territory, and it is clear how this can cause problems, particularly on international stretches of line.

It is true that adapting the rail infrastructure and the rolling stock of the European system will involve technical and economic assessments and tasks, which will inevitably have to be managed by companies in the sector. However, we cannot fail to observe that European legislation does not set a date by which the national lines must be adapted to the ERTMS system and that it gives the Member States the power to determine the equipment needs of their rolling stock.

It would be better to impose and to set dates, to incentivise by means of investments or, better still, to withdraw investment from those who fail to adapt to the infrastructure projects or who purchase rolling stock that does not use these systems.

The other argument is that interoperability and the completion of the internal market should not be slowed down. Today, we have an independent national safety agency, which should verify the adoption of the appropriate safety systems. Well, it should be stipulated that safety certificates must be obtained before operating licences can be granted.

Furthermore, I would stress that, looking ahead to the prospect of a free common rail market, the European Railway Agency's inspection powers must be strengthened at central level.

Debora Serracchiani (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, following the recent rail accident in Brussels, which many Members have mentioned, the spotlight has once again been on the safety of the railways.

Directive 2004/49/EC on safety of the railways in general stipulates that railway undertakings and infrastructure managers should bear the full responsibility for the safety of the system, each for their own part.

In the specific case of the accident that occurred in Belgium, human error seems to have been the cause. We shall, of course, await the investigations. It would appear, however, that the train was not fitted with an automatic braking system.

Is the Commission aware of which networks and which trains within the Member States are not fitted with this safety device? Moreover, does it intend to draft a legislative proposal so as to ensure that the Union's entire network is fitted with this system?

Śławomir Witold Nitras (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, first of all, I would like to express my sympathy to the victims' families. I would like to talk about something which seems to me to be very important, and which has not been said here. There is a debate here which, in many ways, is justified. I, too, have my own very clear views on the matter. I think a deregulated market is significantly better than a market dominated by state-owned firms, but I would like to talk about something which is important in the context of this discussion.

This dispute is not only about whether a firm is state-owned or privately-owned; it is also about whether the market is a free market or a restricted, regulated market, which often means, in fact, that in many Member States, there is a monopoly held by a single state-owned firm. There are so many railway systems, and they are not only different in each Member State, but in many cases, different systems are in use in a single Member State, and the systems we are talking about are often a protectionist administrative barrier put up only to protect the monopoly firm in the national market. In many cases, certain equipment and locomotives are not allowed, simply to limit the possibility of a competitor from another country or a private competitor from entering the market. The consequence of this is the establishment of so many different systems and the emergence of safety problems.

If you looked at the allocation of structural funds for infrastructure projects in new Member States, you would see that in those countries, there is practically no money for railway infrastructure. The administrators who are supposed to fill in applications and apply for money are not in the least interested in this. We are dealing with a model in which many Member States do not want anything to change in their railways, so that competition coming from other countries or the private market, for example, will not be in a good position. It is then safety and competitiveness which suffer because of this.

Ivo Belet (PPE). – (NL) The tragic accident in Buizingen obliges all of us – Europe included – to open an investigation. This tragedy cost the lives of 18 people, and we owe it to those victims to learn lessons from the disaster in the short term and to ensure that safety is guaranteed on Belgian and European railway lines.

As we know, and you have already said, it is not Europe's fault that the automatic stop system has yet to be fully introduced in Belgium. Yet this does not mean that Europe is not now required to act; quite the reverse. We expressly call for the European Commission, too, to now carry out an evaluation, which must provide the answers to several very specific questions. For example, as you know, we have obliged railway companies – including private firms – to fully equip their trains with the new European Train Control System (ETCS) as of 2013, yet we already know that Europe's railway lines will not have been equipped with that system by then.

I wish to cite two figures. At the present time, Commissioner, only 2 800 kilometres of railway in the whole of Europe has been equipped with this new European safety system. The Belgian rail network alone, with its 3 400 kilometres, is larger than that. It is clear, therefore, that we in Europe are not ready for this and that therefore our trains will be unable, or insufficiently able, to communicate with these new signalling installations. This necessitates a thorough evaluation.

Commissioner, we must also dare to investigate whether the forthcoming competition between railway companies has maybe increased the pressure on staff. Should we perhaps consider introducing driving hours and rest periods for train drivers at European level, as we did for lorry drivers? In short, this accident obliges the European Union to do some soul-searching and carry out an evaluation, and there must also be the readiness and political will to make adjustments if necessary.

Michael Cramer (Verts/ALE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, two locomotives were involved in this dreadful accident which were operated by the SNCB, the Belgian National Railways, on a state rail network. There is no competition on the rail passenger transport market in Belgium. Therefore, this has nothing to do with competition or with the opening up of the network. It is all about unsatisfactory safety standards. Mr Grosch has already pointed out that the technology for stopping a train automatically when it passes a red signal has been in existence for more than 20 years. The question is: why was it not installed?

This also has nothing to do with the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). I was the rapporteur for the ERTMS. It represents a vision of the future, but it does not absolve the Member States from the responsibility of putting in place safety measures which are already available on a national level. That is a task for the individual countries.

Therefore, the question we must ask is why Belgium did not invest in this safety system over the last 20 years. If they had built a motorway that was shorter by one or two kilometres, they would have had twice or three times the money needed to install these safety systems and avoid accidents like this one. This was not the first time that a train has passed a red signal. It was simply the first time that this has led to such a dreadful accident.

Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, of course, this discussion, now initiated by the tragic accident in Belgium, will be part of our overall discussion on railway safety and the development of transport in Europe. The Commission is preparing a White Paper on the future of transport which takes serious consideration of all safety and security aspects of all modes of transport, including railways – which is, as was mentioned many times, still one of the safest modes of transport.

It is also important that we now discuss the railway package – the 'first recast' of the railway package – and we will definitely work on this and consider it.

But I would just like to make some factual remarks. The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) has been designed with the intention to have interoperability of railways. It is obviously a good system which has very serious safety elements. However, safety still remains the responsibility of Member States, whatever system is used. But the ERTMS is progressing very well.

Transport TEN-T Networks: again we will discuss it soon. This particular project deals with the deployment of the traffic management system. By 2020, 20 000 kilometres of railways will use this system in Europe, including Belgium.

This is ongoing; but in railways, things take time and investments are large and 85% of the TEN-T Network money is used especially to improve the railways, including the ERTMS. Of course, I would be very happy if, with the support of the European Parliament, we could increase the funding of investments to transport networks. That will be very important.

But again, of course, the human factor is always relevant. And as we are talking about safety standards, there is one standard – which is the red light – that means that you must stop. That standard has existed since the 19th century. So if we are now saying that there will be a 100% sure braking system which avoids human error – it is not true. There is always some small possibility for human error. And human responsibility is very important.

I would like to make one more remark about liberalisation and public services: these are two different things. Nobody is stopping states from offering good public services, even in the framework of liberalisation. It is allowed by European rules to provide support – it is allowed by states – and this liberalisation does not exclude good public services.

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE), in writing. – (DE) The tragic train accident in Belgium has attracted public attention to safety on the railways. The safety of the rolling stock must be improved, as well as the safety of the signalling systems. There are many completely outdated goods wagons, in particular, on the railways in Europe. The accident in Italy last year demonstrated the possible consequences of this. Unfortunately the EU has so far done very little to oblige freight operators to bring their rolling stock up to an acceptable safety standard. It is important to remember that hazardous goods are also transported by rail, which could have devastating consequences in the event of an accident. Against this background, I am calling for higher safety standards on the railways.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) The tragedy that plunged Belgium into its present state of mourning undoubtedly occurred for reasons to do with the specific characteristics of that country, as many of our Flemish fellow Members have emphasised today. It will be up to the investigation to determine the extent to which those characteristics were responsible for the tragedy.

However, it did have one particular, fundamental cause: the liberalisation of rail transport and the separation of the management of the network from that of rail transport itself. Therefore, the network, its quality and its safety have been sacrificed for the sake of the profit of transport operators, which are finding the tolls imposed on them to be too high, just as the replacement and the modernisation of trains is being sacrificed. The timetables and frequency of services today respond to the logic of profit making, and no longer to the needs of users. Even though they are used regularly, some lines are being taken out of service because they are not profitable enough. Others are still in service when common sense suggests that they should not be. Delays are becoming the norm, including in the case of TGV services.

In your liberal system, citizens who take the train have not become much-valued customers; they are still user-taxpayers who can be treated like cattle. As is the case with all the activities that you have liberalised, today we are paying more and more for a service that is becoming increasingly worse, not to say, unfortunately, dangerous.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) In view of the tragic accident in Brussels, we are once again faced with the issue that Member States have not yet fully harmonised their rail safety systems, even though Directive 2004/49/EC clearly establishes common standards for safety indicators and fully meets safety requirements overall, including for infrastructure and traffic management. The major problem is actually a strictly financial issue: the service life of the railway infrastructures and rolling stock, including the signalling systems, is extremely long. In these circumstances, it would be desirable for Member States to look beyond this financial issue, in spite of the crisis, and to consider accelerating the implementation of interoperable systems, as well as invest more in the railway infrastructure and signalling systems for both the infrastructure and rolling stock.

The savings made by delaying the refurbishment and modernisation of the rolling stock and railway infrastructures can, as in this case, unfortunately result in tragic accidents where not only huge economic and financial losses were sustained, but also the loss of human lives, which is unacceptable. I would like to convey my every sympathy to the affected families during this difficult time and I hope that this kind of tragedy will never happen again.

(The sitting was suspended at 11.25 and resumed at 11.30)

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

6. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting

(The Minutes of the previous sitting were approved)

Véronique De Keyser (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, I shall not go back over a regrettable incident that took place yesterday in this House, an incident unworthy of this Parliament, in which Mr Van Rompuy was insulted. The President of the European Council is perfectly capable of defending himself, but I will not tolerate someone saying, in this House, that my country is a non-country. It is a founding country of the European Union and one that will very soon take up the Presidency. I do not understand how, in this House, one can stoop so low as to say such things, and I demand an apology, Mr President.

(Applause)

Gerard Batten (EFD). – Mr President, on a point of order, I would like to speak under the same rule that the lady spoke under, in which she referred to my colleague Nigel Farage.

It is called politics. You have foisted the Lisbon Treaty on our countries without consulting the people, and when my colleague says something about it and people do not like it, they complain. It is called politics. That is what we had in our country before the European Union destroyed our democracy, so get used to listening to opposition in this place.

President. – Mr Batten, the previous statement was a statement made in reply to something said yesterday in Parliament. That was the rule under which it was made. It was not a point of order. Therefore, your point of order was out of place.

7. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

7.1. Investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Community (A7-0016/2010, Adina-Ioana Vălean)

7.2. Situation in Ukraine (B7-0116/2010)

- Before the vote on paragraph 4a:

Cristian Dan Preda, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (FR) Mr President, I would like to table the following amendment: ‘calls on the Ukrainian authorities, while recognising that Ukraine has ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to make greater efforts to reach out to minority communities in Ukraine by further integrating these communities in the political developments of the country and promoting adequately the right to education in minority languages;’.

The reason is very simple: we must use the post-electoral context to point out that the Union’s external policy is based on respect for human rights, including minority rights.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

- Before the vote on paragraph 14:

Michael Gahler, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (DE) Mr President, if my oral amendment is accepted, we do not need a split vote. It reads as follows:

‘calls on the Commission to align closely the National Indicative Programme 2011-13 with the Association Agenda’.

(DE) In the original text as it stands at the moment, it is exactly the reverse and that is incorrect.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

- Before the vote on paragraph 15:

Michael Gahler, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (DE) Mr President, this is only a factual correction. The new wording is correct. In the original text, the reference is wrong. I do not need to read it out, as you have the motion in front of you in writing.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

7.3. Parliament's priorities for the UN Human Rights Council (Geneva, 1-26 March 2010) (B7-0119/2010)

- Before the vote:

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, yesterday, during the debate on the motion for a resolution on which we are about to vote, we expressed our sorrow at the death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a 42-year-old builder and Cuban political prisoner, who died after a hunger strike and many years of arbitrary, unjust, inhumane and cruel imprisonment.

In this House yesterday, Commissioner Georgieva strongly and forcefully condemned this event. I am calling on you, Mr President, on behalf of Parliament, to send your condolences to Mr Zapata's family, which is being harassed at his funeral.

I would ask you to communicate to the Cuban authorities your strongest condemnation of this completely avoidable death, which the head of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and Reconciliation, Elizardo Sánchez, described as a murder dressed up as justice. I hope, Mr President, that this death will lead to reflection among those who, out of good faith or naivety, want to change the Council's common position, an honourable position that merely serves to link any improvement in relations with the island to human rights and fundamental freedoms, which, as we have seen, continue to be violated.

(Applause)

- After the vote on Amendment 3:

Elmar Brok (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I propose an oral amendment for a split vote on paragraph 10, concerning the following passage: ‘considers that the inclusion of this concept in the Protocol on complementary standards on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination is not appropriate’. A split vote must be held on this central part, because I do not understand why we are combining these things and not making it clear that we must combat discrimination against religious minorities just as vigorously as all other types of discrimination. It is not acceptable for the measures to combat discrimination against religious minorities to be less strict. Therefore, we should have the possibility of a split vote.

(Parliament rejected the request for a split vote)

- Before the vote on paragraph 20:

Elmar Brok (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I would also like to request a split vote concerning the deletion of the words ‘EU positions’ from the last sentence. The text would then read: ‘calls for the recommendations and related observations to be included in EU dialogues with both sides, as well as in multilateral fora’. The words ‘EU positions’ would be deleted. I would like to ask for a split vote in this case.

(Parliament rejected the request for a split vote)

7.4. Beijing +15 - UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality

7.5. Estimates of revenue and expenditure for Amending Budget 1/2010 (Section I, European Parliament) (A7-0017/2010, Vladimír Maňka)

7.6. Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy (A7-0014/2010, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves)

8. Communication of Council common positions: see Minutes

9. Explanations of vote

President. – The next item is the oral explanations of vote.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – Mr President, can I ask you for a two-minute break while people are leaving the Chamber? Or a one-minute break?

Report: Adina-Ioana Vălean (A7-0016/2010)

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – (HU) The aim of the regulation is a positive one: to collect information from Member States relating to energy infrastructure, organise it and make it accessible at Community level to economic actors. It thus – rightly – intervenes in the functioning of the market. Parliament has, however, accepted an initiative that is diametrically opposed to this, and even goes so far as to regard that as being the political aim of the regulation. I quote: Any measures proposed or taken at Union level should be neutral and should not amount to interventions in the functioning of the market. The majority of those sitting in this Parliament have learnt nothing from the global financial and economic crisis. It continues to stand up for neoliberal dogmas and even in this strategic area, it trusts in the self-regulation of the market. This is unacceptable, and hence I have voted against the resolution.

Peter Jahr (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, a functioning infrastructure in the European Union is a decisive factor in the reasonable growth of prosperity. Alongside food security and a common foreign and security policy, energy policy plays a crucial role. For this reason alone, it is essential for the European Parliament not only to take part in this discussion, but also to have the right of codecision. Therefore, I call on the Commission to bring an end to its blockade policy and to grant Parliament the right of codecision.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, I will speak very briefly. The whole idea is quite right. I particularly like the emphasis on the ecological aspect. Since we are talking about this, let us be consistent. It was precisely matters relating to ecology and environment protection which were the significant, factual arguments on which opposition to the idea of the Northern Gas Pipeline was based. Those very justified, practical and scientifically substantiated arguments were thrown away because political reasons had triumphed. I think that when supporting this project, we should remember not to be hypocritical in politics. With the Northern Gas Pipeline, this was forgotten by many Member States of the European Union and by many of the political groups.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) At the beginning of 2009, it was apparent that the European Union and the Member States were incapable of helping each other in the event of supply breakdowns involving either electricity or gas. It was apparent that the power grids in the west and in the east are not interlinked, have different parameters and are not compatible.

It is therefore a good thing that states and grid operators will provide essential information on their energy delivery capacities to the European Commission, which will then be able to assess the shortcomings of the networks and of EU energy security policy and will be able to inform individual countries about the reserve capacity in their energy systems. From this perspective, I believe we should support the initiative of the Council and the Commission on the supply and collection of information in the field of energy for the benefit of the European Union.

Motion for a resolution RC-B7-0116/2010

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE). – (LT) I would particularly like to stress my support for Ukraine for holding democratic elections and giving people the opportunity to express their free will. Knowing Ukraine well, I

can see that not just the government, but society itself, is actively following the path to democracy and establishing democratic institutions. I also have the hope that these elections will bring Ukraine even closer to the European Union, and may even build a stronger bridge in EU-Russia cooperation. I am also delighted that perhaps even a post-Soviet country will soon enter a visa-free regime with the European Union.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the resolution on the situation in Ukraine is balanced and gives an objective view of reality. It only remains to wish Ukraine success in overcoming its economic problems and the very deep division in society over Ukraine's geopolitical future.

I would also like to draw attention to the decision of outgoing President Yushchenko to confer the title of 'National Hero of Ukraine' on Stefan Bandera, and the decree recognising two nationalist organisations, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, as participants in the fight for Ukraine's independence. Both Stefan Bandera and these two organisations were responsible for ethnic cleansing and atrocities committed against the Polish population in the 1940s in parts of what is, today, western Ukraine. The nationalists murdered 120 000 Poles. In wishing the very best for Ukraine, I do hope that the glorification of extreme, criminal nationalism will be condemned.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, I had the pleasure of being a European Parliament observer during the first round of the presidential elections in Ukraine. I must say that the Ukrainian people passed the exam. The elections were very transparent and democratic, despite the last-minute changes which were made to the electoral regulations.

Today, Ukraine needs political, administrative and economic stability. Therefore, while respecting the democratic choice of the Ukrainian people, we should support and accelerate those measures which will help Ukraine overcome existing problems. The European Union should give a clear signal that the door is open for Ukraine's accession to the European Union. If the European Union is truly interested in Ukraine, the first step towards this should be lifting the visa requirement for Ukrainians. I hope that adoption of today's resolution will accelerate work on bringing these ideas into being. This is why I voted for adoption of the resolution.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, I had the pleasure of being an observer during the presidential elections in Ukraine, at both the first and second rounds, as, indeed, I had several years ago. I would like to say that we should treat Ukraine as a partner, and not interfere with the sympathies of the Ukrainian electorate. I consider as absolutely unnecessary the statement made in this House yesterday by one of the leaders of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, a liberal, who said that the new President will be pro-Moscow. The new President of Ukraine, on his first foreign visit since taking office, is coming to Brussels. We should assess Ukrainian politicians by what they do, and not by whatever declarations they might have made. Ukraine should be our political partner, and we should open the way for Ukraine to join the European Union. I am pleased by the statement of the new President that he will annul the decree which Mr Kalinowski spoke about, the scandalous decree which recognises as a national hero of Ukraine a man who has the blood of many thousands of Poles on his hands.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, I voted against the motion for a resolution because I consider, first of all, that it is an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine and that it contains contradictory references. It is unacceptable from that point of view.

Secondly, because I consider that the Ukrainian people will only suffer from participation in the European Union. This particular motion for a resolution is paving the way for these prospects and, of course, there will also be restructurings during that process, as in so many other countries.

Thirdly, one of the basic reasons why I voted against the motion is the reference to Bandera. The motion is quite right to refer to him. However, this House and the European Union have a huge responsibility where we have such phenomena, not only in Ukraine, but also in other countries, in the Baltic States, as you well know, and the European Union and the European Parliament have a truly huge responsibility for the fact that we have arrived at a point where war crimes are restored.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) There has been a change of political leadership in Ukraine but there has been no change for the general population of Ukraine. It is a population which may be impoverished, but which lives in a country that is extremely rich and has enormous potential.

From this perspective, I believe that the European Union should continue the dialogue with Ukraine and press for a more intensive and more effective dialogue. Ukraine genuinely needs help from the EU, and it is,

above all, the people that need it, not the politicians, but the people of Ukraine, and cooperation between Ukraine and the EU could result in a very strong partnership, as well as very strong collaboration and a very strong boost to the economy. I would like us to show greater initiative in this area.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, Soviet Communism was the most murderous ideology devised by our species. In empirical terms, it murdered more people than any other political system, and disproportionately, those casualties were suffered by Ukraine.

And this tragedy continues. The name of Ukraine, as I understand it, means 'frontier', or 'edge', and here it is as an edge between two large blocs, the division between Slavophiles and Westernisers within that country being mirrored by the rival ambitions of its neighbouring powers.

What could we most usefully do to help that country? We could offer to open our markets. Ukrainians are an educated and industrious people, but they enjoy relatively cheap costs and relatively competitive exports. If we simply admitted them fully into a European Customs Union, we would substantially improve their quality of life.

Instead, what we are doing is urging more bureaucracy on them, building capacity, trying to draw them into the cooperative structures of the European Union. They are not asking for that! They do not want our hand-outs. All they want is the opportunity to sell.

Report: Adina-Ioana Vălean (A7-0016/2010)

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, it is human nature when something unexpected happens that we try and fit the facts into our existing *Weltanschauung*. The psychiatrists have a fancy phrase for it, an even fancier phrase than *Weltanschauung*: they call it 'cognitive dissonance'. Thus, for example, when there is a 'no' vote in a referendum, the reaction of this House is to say that the people wanted more Europe. They were voting 'no' because this did not go in a sufficiently federalist direction.

And so it is with the current economic crisis. We are in a crisis because we have run out of money. We have spent everything, we have exhausted our treasuries, we have exhausted our credit, and now the House comes along and says that we need to spend more. We need more European infrastructure projects, we need a higher budget.

Mr President, that is another dose of the medicine that caused the illness in the first place. We have seen since the 1970s where that process leads. It leads to a reduction of GDP, it leads to unemployment, it leads to stagnation and it leads to this part of the world falling further and further behind its rivals.

Motion for a resolution RC-B7-0123/2010

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE). – Mr President, I supported the resolution and, as one of the draftsmen of this document, I would like to make a few points on the Goldstone report, the issue which is addressed in the resolution.

The Goldstone report has once again showed that investigations carried out by the warring parties themselves are hardly ever impartial and objective. The report is rather explicit that neither side has conducted adequate and effective investigations of alleged violations of the laws of war by its forces.

Also, we should welcome the fact that the report has been revised recently and made less controversial, with less bitter language, and is therefore more acceptable.

And the main lesson we should learn from this is that we should put effort into making the European Union more involved in the process, not only when it comes to the investigation of alleged crimes, but in a pro-active, preventive way as a party to the Middle East Quartet.

Martin Kastler (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say on behalf of part of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and, above all, on behalf of my colleague, Elmar Brok, that we are shocked that the House has today rejected the amendment which would have included Christians and other religious minorities in this report. I think it is truly outrageous that, although we are constantly making statements on human rights issues, we do not believe it is worth protecting parts of the population who are being persecuted because of their religious background. It is a great pity that we could not accept the amendment which concerns a subject that is of great importance for the future of the world. If we are not able to protect minorities for whatever reason, we no longer have the right to claim that the

European Parliament is the home of human rights, of fundamental rights and of this struggle throughout the world. I have voted against this, because religious minorities should not be excluded.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, as Mr Kastler said before, our group would have very much liked to vote separately on this point regarding religious minorities, but, unfortunately, the majority in Parliament did not agree.

We have to realise that defending the rights of religious minorities is in every way just as important as defending any other minority groups.

The EU should intervene in the work of the UN Commission on Human Rights, because at present it is totally paralysed and biased, and no longer enjoys universal confidence.

The Goldstone report is only one example of how the UN's Human Rights Court has been hijacked to serve the interests of various anti-Semitic elements. Currently, 21 of the 25 reports on individual countries that the Court has produced concern Israel, as if Israel were the world's most oppressive country in the area of human rights. The European Union needs to intervene in the work of the UN Human Rights Council.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, since the end of the Cold War, a revolutionary new doctrine has imposed itself on the 200 states that comprise the United Nations. The idea has arisen that laws should not emerge from national legislatures which are in some sense connected to their populations but rather should be imposed by an international technocracy of jurists who answer only to their own consciences.

We are reversing 300 years of democratic development. We are getting away from the idea that the people who pass the laws must answer in some way through the ballot box to the rest of their populations and we are reverting to the pre-modern idea that lawmakers should be accountable only to their creator or to themselves.

Through these instruments of human rights codes, these international bureaucracies have the ability to reach behind the borders of Member States and to impose their own wishes at odds with those of the local populations.

Let me finish with a quotation from Judge Bork in the United States, the quashed Supreme Court nominee under Reagan, who gave his name to the language when he said: 'What we have wrought is a *coup d'état*: slow-moving and genteel, but a *coup d'état* none the less.'

Motion for a resolution B7-0118/2010

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, the question of gender equality faces yet another challenge at the present stage. The progress achieved over recent years in the equality sector by the European Union is in danger of slowing down, or even of reversing, as a result of the current recession.

However, effective gender equality policies can form part of the solution to the problem of how to get out of this crisis, support recovery and strengthen the economy. Consequently, investment in policies that promote equality between men and women must be our basic ambition and must be robustly supported by all of us, even more, even more strongly, in this difficult economic climate.

Report: Vladimír Maňka (A7-0017/2010)

Frank Vanhecke (NI). – (NL) In my view, Parliament should be a little ashamed of the de facto budget amendment it has just adopted in this report. After all, more or less all European countries are suffering a huge financial and economic crisis and masses of people are losing their jobs, and the best we can come up with is to allocate ourselves substantially more resources, more staff and more costs at the taxpayer's expense. Besides, everyone knows that these additional resources and staff members are, in fact, mainly intended to ensure that the various socialists who lost their mandates in recent elections are well looked after financially. In the past, too, this has led to other substantial increases in subsidies, including to European political parties and European political foundations. It is striking that, time and again, we are finding nice-sounding arguments for delving even further into the tax coffers for this institution; an unacceptable practice in these times of crisis.

Miguel Portas, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (PT) I would like to say that the amending budget that we have just approved, to the sum of EUR 13 400 000, with effect only from 1 May, thus covering half a year, is very unwise.

The part of it that relates to increasing human resources for Parliamentary committees and groups to the sum of EUR 4 million can be justified because the Treaty of Lisbon is making new legislative demands of Parliament. Increasing MEPs' funds for hiring assistants by EUR 8 million, however, means that next year, it will not be 8 million, but 16 million, and this is clearly excessive, as in the coming year, a new increase of EUR 1 500 per month is planned for Members, which amounts to not 16, but EUR 32 million. At a time when we are seeing massive unemployment and social crisis in all our countries, moving towards increases in resources for Members is not sustainable unless, at the same time, we have the courage to cut down on the expenses and allowances to which we are entitled as Members, and which are by no means all completely justified.

I fail to understand how, for a day of travelling, an MEP can receive EUR 300 in allowances, plus a subsidy for the distance travelled and a subsidy for the time taken, provisions that are entirely tax-free. We can cut undue expenses and then debate how we can increase our means for law making. Not doing this at the same time simply shows a disregard for the difficulties that our constituents are experiencing. We have a duty to set a good example, but today we are setting a bad one.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, I am delighted to agree with Mr Portas and the Communist Group on this issue. All across Europe, from Ireland to Latvia, governments are struggling to respond to the financial crisis, to the credit crunch, by reducing their costs but we in this House, uniquely in this House, are massively increasing our expenditure in both relative and absolute terms. We are increasing the perks and the budgets available to Members and to staff.

The justification which is given in this report is a very interesting one because the reason that we are told we need all of this extra spending is because of the additional responsibilities created by the Lisbon Treaty. In a way, that is true, but I think not in the way that the authors intended it. What we see is that the bureaucracy is expanding to service the needs of the bureaucracy. The primary function of the Lisbon Treaty is to provide additional work and additional revenue for all the tens of thousands who are now directly or indirectly dependent on the European Union for their livelihoods. The one lot of people that we have not consulted about this are the electorates and I would love to see issues like this put before our voters to see whether they approve of our voting ourselves additional resources at such a time, when now all of them are tightening their own belts.

Report: Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (A7-0014/2010)

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE). – (LT) I greatly welcome the decision adopted on new rules in the fishing sector. Fish, like other animals, cannot be restricted to certain territories, so assessing whether one country cares more than another would be the subject of endless arguments.

If we take into account new scientific research proving that today, many fish species are bordering on extinction, the need for a common decision becomes even more obvious, not just on an EU scale, but on a global scale. Therefore, this step by the European Union is welcomed as a good example to other third countries.

I hope that this decision which is also responsible for joint analysis will help both companies working in the fishing sector and countries, irrespective of their size. I also hope that this decision will help save disappearing fish species. I would like to express my wholehearted support.

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, it gave me no pleasure today to vote against a report that contains many potentially positive aspects for the future of our fisheries.

Yet the fact remains that for my fishing industry, the common fisheries policy continues to wreak havoc.

The Hague Preference regime annually discriminates against Northern Ireland's fishermen by deducting quotas from their allocations. Eleven years of temporary closures in the Irish Sea have reduced our whitefish fleet from over 40 trawlers to six, and yet we still talk about over-capacity.

Then there is the question of applying rules developed for fisheries in the North Sea to the Irish Sea: a consistent or common approach that is out of touch with reality on the ground. Consider only the net gauges, which were agreed for admirable reasons, but which Europe imposed upon the fishing industry with a wholesale failure to communicate the implications of the change to the new method.

That is why, while I am encouraged by some aspects of the report, I voted against it.

Laima Liucija Andrikienė (PPE). – (LT) I voted in favour of the resolution on the Green Paper on the guidelines for the reform of the common fisheries policy. I hope that with today's vote, the European Parliament contributed at least a little to the conservation of fish stocks and a healthy marine environment, and also to reform of the common fisheries policy.

As we in the European Parliament know, 27% of fish species are on the brink of extinction and unless fishing is restricted, they will disappear. We also know that it would be possible to increase fish stocks by 86% if fish were not caught in such a drastic way. We know too that the stocks of 18% of fish species are in a poor condition and scientists recommend that we should stop fishing them immediately.

I hope and pray that the European Union will have sufficient political will to not just draft the reform, but implement it as well.

Hannu Takkula (ALDE). – (FI) Mr President, I would first like to say that I voted for the Green Paper on the reform of the fisheries policy, as our group were advised to by our shadow rapporteur, Carl Haglund.

I nevertheless wish to say that it is very important to give more attention to fishing in the European Union and the state of the waters. That is a huge challenge at present. I am particularly worried that the situation has got out of hand with overfishing in the EU – which is tantamount to theft, in fact – and that quantity is taking priority over quality.

We should now start to think more seriously about how we could build up fish stocks sustainably and ensure that we are also able to fish in the future. The focus here mainly needs to be on wild salmon and stocks of wild fish. We need to draw up a special programme for the recovery of wild salmon.

I come from Finnish Lapland. We need salmon back in our spawning rivers, and we need a programme to ensure that wild salmon stocks in particular can be retained and strengthened and that they can also be fished sustainably in the future.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Mr President, for 11 years in this House, I have been protesting about the common fisheries policy's negative impacts on my home country: under international law, the United Kingdom had 65% of the fish stocks in North Sea waters covered by the CFP but we were allocated 25% by volume or 15% by value under the quota system.

That argument is becoming academic because the fish have effectively disappeared. Even in the time that I have been in this House, there has been a calamitous decline in what ought to have been a renewable resource. In other countries which found a way to incentivise ownership, to give the fishermen a reason to treat the seas as a renewable harvest, they managed to sustain their fish levels: in Iceland, in Norway, in New Zealand, in the Falkland Islands. But in Europe, we had the tragedy of 'the commons', where we said it was a common resource to which all vessels had equal access.

You cannot persuade a skipper to tie up his boat when he knows that the waters are being plundered by someone else. As I said, the argument is now effectively academic. It is over. Our boats are grounded. Our fishing ports are sterile. Our oceans are empty.

Written explanations of vote

Report: Adina-Ioana Vălean (A7-0016/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for this report because it makes some improvements to the current system which will support better reporting of information about the investment projects involving the EU's energy infrastructure. The need to improve the reporting system stems from the change in the energy situation at a time when energy interdependency between states has increased and we have an internal market. This has therefore made it necessary for us to have instruments at EU level as well, to help us make decisions about the energy sector.

I support the change to the legal basis proposed by the Commission so that the regulation can be based on Article 194 of the Treaty of Lisbon. The aim is to strengthen the role that EU institutions can play in energy policy, especially in the operation of the energy market and resource security, the promotion of energy efficiency and development of new forms of renewable energy, as well as in supporting the interconnection of energy networks.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) I voted in favour of the report on investment in energy infrastructure, which is aimed at ensuring energy supply and competitive potential, and strengthening the fight against climate change. This report compels the governments of the European Union to give information to the Commission in relation to the investment being made in energy infrastructure, in modernisation, or in efficient energy production, which will help with efficiency, cooperation and energy planning in the European Union. Combating climate change, ensuring energy supply and using renewable energy: these are very important issues in the European Union and greater efforts must be made to encourage and ensure effective, focussed investment, and it must be ensured that these issues remain at the heart of the European Union's energy policy.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported this report. The European Union has gained new powers on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty and must ensure that those powers are fully and effectively used. The EU competence is strengthened in the field of energy policy, and the creation of a common energy market is a priority task for the European Commission. However, the European energy policy cannot be effectively promoted without having adequate and clear information about existing and planned energy infrastructure and projects in the European Union.

The new regulation is a very important piece of legislation in the EU energy policy and I very much hope that it can work in practice. The European energy policy cannot be effectively promoted without having adequate and clear information about existing and planned energy infrastructure in the European Union.

As we know, under the old regulation, many Member States did not comply with the reporting obligations and this should not be the case with the new regulation. The European Commission, as the guardian of the EU Treaty, must ensure that all Member States comply with the provisions of the regulation and timely submit all necessary information on the expected developments in energy infrastructure.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) A coherent EU energy policy is a complete non-starter unless the 27 Member States can provide accurate, comprehensive reporting on the energy investments which have been made separately in each of their countries. However, it is important for the European Union's executive to bear in mind the need to protect the confidentiality of the information supplied by national agencies, as we are dealing with sensitive information from a very important market.

Europe's energy security is an important issue, but the Commission must be aware that the information received from each state separately cannot be disclosed, especially where it is of a purely commercial nature. Reporting on energy investment projects once every two years will allow the European Commission to prepare a regular analysis which will define the subsequent development of the European Union's energy system. This will therefore make it possible to intervene in time when any gaps or problems appear.

A mechanism needs to be found for complying with the reporting conditions requested by the European Commission in circumstances where the provisions of the previous regulation on informing the Commission about investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Community were not complied with by all Member States.

Antonio Cancian (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) We are today voting in favour of this regulation, bolstered by the increased authority that the Treaty of Lisbon confers on Parliament within the context of defining energy policies. It is definitely beneficial to pursue interinstitutional cooperation aimed at planning the EU's contribution to the design and implementation of energy infrastructure in a systematic, rational and far-sighted manner: I am thinking of the possible advantages for the programming of the TEN-E and the launch of pilot projects for CO₂ storage, which represent the future of energy. However, the information obligations imposed by the regulation could mean that the policy interferes too much in the economy and that competition is undermined, as a result of news being spread about the projects. It is therefore important to ensure that the data that is gathered and managed safeguards the confidentiality and the activities of businesses. Analysis of this data will certainly help to ensure that best use is made of the investments. However, the analysis must be accompanied by concrete financial measures to support those works and to provide an incentive for private investment in the sector. The Marguerite Fund for infrastructure, energy and climate change must be strengthened. The initiative is valid and necessary, but this fund needs to be swelled with the EU resources that are already available in the budget and linked to forms of financing guaranteed by the European Investment Bank and/or other financial institutions, so that it can have an adequate share in the equity of the individual public-private partnerships that are in operation.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon has given the European Union greater powers in the area of energy policy.

It is essential that the Member States work together to guarantee an energy policy that is more efficient, safer and less expensive for their citizens. Bringing about the stability necessary to reduce the risk of another crisis over gas between Ukraine and Russia is crucial. This would ensure the security of supplies, as expected by the Member States of the EU and its consumers.

One of the EU's biggest priorities is establishing an energy area. The climate and energy package aims to increase the competitiveness of EU industry in a world where there are ever more restrictions on carbon emissions.

This regulation on investment projects related to energy infrastructure within the European Union will help to make the market more transparent and predictable, supporting our businesses and creating a positive environment for competitiveness.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – In order for the European Commission to be able to effectively perform its tasks with regard to the European energy policy, it must necessarily be kept well informed of any developments in the relevant sector. This is one of the reasons for which I have decided to vote in favour of this report.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the proposal for a Council Regulation concerning the notification to the Commission of investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Community and repealing Regulation (EC) No 736/96, as this will allow the Commission to monitor this infrastructure and anticipate potential problems, especially environmental problems. It is therefore worth stressing the importance of assessing the environmental impact of energy infrastructure projects, so that their construction and decommissioning can be done in a sustainable way.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Given the importance of an integrated energy policy, not only in combating climate change and reducing CO₂ emissions, but also in ensuring efficiency and less energy dependence within Europe, communication and transmission of information about investments and energy infrastructure projects is crucial.

It is vital for European energy policy that the Commission has a current view of trends in energy investments within the Member States so as to be able to develop integrated policies to promote greater energy efficiency and investment in cleaner technologies, thus ensuring progressive energy independence in the face of external suppliers and fossil fuels.

In view of this, I support the proposal for a regulation, particularly with regard to its necessary implementation, which did not happen with the regulation that it seeks to replace.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) This proposal for a regulation contributes to establishing a European energy policy that aims at efficiency, reliability and security. Energy efficiency is a priority policy for the European Union given the need to preserve and maximise resources and fulfil the commitments that it has made in combating climate change.

I would remind you that before moving on to new projects, the EU's objective of achieving the target of 20% for energy efficiency must be taken into account. This means that investment projects in energy infrastructures must be compatible with the aim of achieving a minimum of 20% of energy from sustainable, renewable sources by 2020. The energy policy that is being advocated must ensure low carbon emissions and be based on solidarity and sustainability. The reliability of the system is important, as operation must be continuous. It must take account of the deterioration of the energy sector in terms of supply, which can be seen both inside and outside the EU. It is also worth paying attention to crucial investment in infrastructure that manages to avoid security problems in terms of energy supply.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The rapporteur considers that this is indeed an important piece of the puzzle in the EU energy policy, reasoning that we cannot effectively promote a European energy policy at EU level without having adequate information about our energy infrastructure. Yet, beyond our fundamental disagreement about European energy policy, this report can also be placed within a legal context, or within the framework of the internal market.

However, some positive aspects are also considered here, particularly when it states that it is essential that the confidentiality of information is ensured and that any resulting proposals are neutral and do not amount to market intervention on a political level. Furthermore, the reporting requirements should be easy to fulfil, so as to avoid any unnecessary administrative burden on undertakings, and the administration of Member States or of the Commission.

Hence our final decision to abstain.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the Vălean report on the proposal for a Council regulation concerning the notification to the Commission of investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Community.

Indeed, it is crucial to have a sufficiently detailed overview in order to strike a better balance between the supply and demand of energy at European level and to decide on the shrewdest investments in terms of infrastructure. This will also make it possible to increase transparency on the markets (while protecting corporate data) and to prevent the phenomena of energy dependence with regard to one particular source or site of supply.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Despite the disappointment of Copenhagen, the EU cannot allow the lack of international consensus to slow down our own efforts in effecting a sustainable energy policy. The Scottish Government is continuing to pioneer in the field of renewable energy and the EU has an important role, too, in driving forward the agenda. The effective promotion of our energy policy requires adequate information on infrastructure and I voted accordingly today.

Alan Kelly (S&D), *in writing*. – The necessity for a comprehensive collection of data on investment in energy infrastructure within the EU is clear – an outline of the major trends occurring in the industry will be needed to allow for proper forward planning and to highlight any potential difficulties. Energy infrastructure will be the foundation of our future economic growth. So where Europe can act together on this, it should be encouraged.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The proposal shows the effects of the emergency gas supply situation that emerged in January 2009, when the Commission realised that the Union's energy infrastructure was not fit for purpose. The European Commission's aim, which Parliament fully supported, was to have a constantly updated picture of the energy infrastructure system. Today, there is great uncertainty about whether the investment projects will be carried out, and it has been made worse by the economic and financial crisis. I believe that intervention is necessary and that the lack of consistent data and information on investment projects should be remedied. Without this data, it is impossible to analyse the expected development of the Union's infrastructure and to introduce satisfactory monitoring in view of a cross-sector approach. Moreover, Regulation (EC) No 736/96, which the proposal in question repeals, is no longer applied consistently and is incompatible with the recent developments in the energy sector. With this proposal, we have therefore strengthened the existing system, significantly improving the comparability of the information while, at the same time, reducing the associated administrative burdens. Lastly, I should like to emphasise the fact that I voted against Amendment 81 (by which the entire nuclear energy chain was to be included in the infrastructure covered by the regulation), since there are already provisions which regulate these matters in the Euratom Treaty.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) EU energy policy is very pertinent if we are to succeed in using mostly renewable energy in the near future. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, decisions on matters relating to energy policy are made in codecision, so it is necessary to readjust the regulations based on the new legal set-up within the EU. For this reason, and so that all Member States are able to communicate the planned development of energy infrastructure in a satisfactory and beneficial way, a new regulation needs to be implemented to make this easier and faster.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The whole plan may well be based on a good idea – namely the ability to react to supply bottlenecks – but the Member States already failed to comply with their reporting obligations under the old regulation. The proposal before us does not seem capable of effecting any great change in this respect. In its current form, however, neither market interventions nor excessive administrative costs for business can be ruled out. For these reasons, and in order not to encourage bureaucracy, I voted against the report.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The aim of this motion for a resolution is to ensure that Member States provide accurate information on their projects in the area of energy infrastructure. As soon as a project in the energy sector is started or discontinued, this must be reported to the Commission, so that the Commission acquires the ability to draw up new or amended project proposals, thereby gaining significant influence over the energy diversity of individual Member States. This represents a further step in the direction of centralisation. I therefore voted against this motion for a resolution.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The purpose of this proposal for a regulation is to ensure that accurate information is provided to the Commission on a regular basis regarding EU investment projects in energy infrastructure to enable it to fulfil its duties, especially those related to its contribution to the European energy policy.

The repealed regulation is regarded as out of date as it does not reflect the major changes which have taken place in the energy sector since 1996 (the European Union's enlargement and the aspects linked to energy supply security, renewable energy sources, the policy on climate change and the EU's new role in the energy sector under the Treaty of Lisbon). I voted for this report as European legislation needs to be updated in every area, and especially in the energy sector.

Teresa Riera Madurell (S&D), in writing. – (ES) This regulation is very important because it aims to ensure that the Commission is accurately and regularly informed of investment projects in energy infrastructure, at both national and cross-border level, so that the Union can ensure that the internal market functions correctly and that all the Member States have a secure energy supply. It seeks to update the 1996 Regulation with regard to the Union's commitments on security of supply, climate change and renewable energies following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. This report is of special interest because it reinforces the regulation's role as an early warning system for interconnection deficiencies. Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy has always stressed the need to achieve a 10% interconnection between Member States, as stipulated by the European Council, and any provision that highlights shortcomings in this respect is very positive. I therefore voted in favour of this report.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of the final resolution mainly because, during the vote, we managed to get: Codecision: this is a huge victory, since, for the first time, we now the TFEU (Lisbon Treaty) legal basis on energy to get codecision against the will of the Commission. Even more historic, for the first time since I worked in this House, we managed to get rid of the Euratom Treaty as a legal basis although this regulation covers also transparency for investments in the nuclear sector. This has been confirmed by the positive vote on AM 30 listing nuclear fuels as a primary energy source under the scope of the regulation. For sure, we will have to fight now to maintain this victory in the upcoming tripartite negotiations with Council and COM; MS must provide, at least five years before construction starts, the amount and types of investment in energy projects. This is a really wise move towards better future energy scenarios, since the Commission will get a better idea of how the energy market is evolving; renewables, including decentralised ones, will have to be fully considered; every single mention of 'low carbon', the pro-nuclear Trojan horse has been deleted.

On the negative side, we tried, without success, through our AMs in plenary, to get better transparency, including on the part of the investments that will be paid by tax payers money and public consultation, although we managed to get lighter wording on consultation and access to documents.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) I voted against Mrs Vălean's report because it calls for liberalisation of the energy sector and a liberal European energy policy, and we all know what tragic consequences that would have for workers in the sector and for more and more of our citizens, who might even experience regular power cuts.

This report establishes the primacy of the market and the neutrality of public interventions and prioritises 'economic operators'. We can be sure whose interests they serve. We can fear for the preservation of the existing infrastructure when an amendment calls for a guarantee that priority investments will be made in the interests of the energy market only.

It is not enough to simply add the word 'solidarity' by way of an amendment in order to make this European energy policy acceptable when, moreover, the very same amendment prohibits the EU from intervening in the operation of the market. That gives a whole new meaning to the words 'fair competition'.

Generally speaking, the aim should not be to focus on trying to meet an ever greater demand for energy. Rather, additional financing for new infrastructure investments should be used to improve energy efficiency.

Despite the current economic crisis, neoliberal dogmas continue to underpin many EU policies.

Motion for a resolution RC-B7-0116/2010

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing. – (LT) I support this resolution and endorse the observations set out in it wholeheartedly. I am delighted that the Presidential elections that took place reflected the considerable

progress made by Ukraine and went better than previous elections, in particular, from the point of view of respect for citizens' and political rights, including freedom of assembly, association and expression. Compliance with international election standards demonstrates that Ukraine is taking the path to a mature democracy and closer cooperation with the EU, based on mutual respect for the fundamental values of the EU. We must encourage Ukraine to actively participate in the Eastern Partnership and support its efforts to ensure more democracy and respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the commitment to safeguard the market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I am one of the people who prepared this resolution and therefore I voted for the goals planned in it. Following the presidential elections, Ukraine must move closer to the European Union. I am delighted that Ukraine is resolutely taking the path to democracy and that it understands it has a rightful place in the community of European democratic countries. The door to Europe should be open for Ukraine.

Transparent elections are an important step in strengthening the principles of the democratic state. Although observers announced that the Ukrainian presidential elections complied with high quality requirements and democratic principles, Ukraine's government institutions should nevertheless adopt clear election rules. Freedom of expression and media pluralism in Ukraine must be ensured for all citizens and election candidates.

It is very important for Ukraine to participate in the Eastern Partnership and in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, cooperating with the European Parliament. Ukraine today is a European country, which has the right to take decisions on Europe. The European Union must cooperate intensively with Ukraine to strengthen the democratic process and integrate into the European Union.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The recently elected president of Ukraine is sending out an important signal by choosing Brussels as the destination for his first foreign visit. Ukraine is a state with European aspirations and the fact that President Yanukovich is coming to the EU's capital to meet with the leading members of the Commission highlights that Kiev is looking towards the West.

The new Ukrainian president is faced with major challenges at a time when the International Monetary Fund has suspended the stand-by agreement signed with Kiev, due to numerous unfulfilled or breached commitments. It is important that President Viktor Yanukovich does not forget the promises he made on the day he assumed his mandate. Ukraine needs, as the new leader in Kiev pointed out, internal stability, as well as to combat corruption and consolidate the economy on healthy foundations. Ukraine needs to regain the confidence of the business sector and international community to be able to successfully overcome the economic recession, exacerbated by an unstable political climate.

The conclusion of the electoral campaign and President Yanukovich's assuming office must signal an end to populist practices such as artificially increasing the population's income on an economically unsustainable basis. President Yanukovich's inaugural speech gives hope to the international community that things can return to normal in Ukraine. It remains in the period that now follows for these words to be demonstrated by actions as well.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I abstained because I consider that relations between the European Union and other countries should be marked by equality, mutually beneficial trade and economic relations, non-interference in the internal development policies and democratic processes of each country and, of course, respect for the will of the people. Constructing a peaceful Europe presupposes, apart from anything else, the facility for each country to determine its international relations without imposition and pressure. As energy security is a crucial factor for the Member States of the European Union, the role of Ukraine is important, which is why it should be encouraged to address its energy problems by improving relations with Russia through bilateral agreements. That would be to the benefit of both sides and would ensure an uninterrupted flow of natural gas to Europe.

Robert Dušek (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) I welcome the compromise resolution drawn up on Ukraine, dealing not only with the issue of how democratic the last election was, but also offering solutions to the problem of transit supplies of oil and natural gas, and urging Ukraine to adopt the Energy Community Treaty and energy legislation conforming to Directive 2003/55/EC. I agree that an active and positive approach to the EU on the part of Ukraine is not the only assessment criterion. Ukraine must also, as a matter of priority, have good relations with its neighbouring countries, the countries of the Eastern Partnership and EURONEST. I support the proposals and also the other provisions in this compromise resolution as a whole and I will vote for their adoption.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution which highlights the importance of strengthening cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. The political and economic stabilisation of that country and the strengthening of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the field of energy are prerequisites for the recognition of Ukraine's European aspirations. The stability of the EU also depends on the stability of its neighbours.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I remember the sense of hope that came with the Orange Revolution, and the break with the Soviet-influenced past that it brought about for the Ukrainian people. I remember the promises of success, progress, democracy and cooperation that were made at that time to the Ukrainians, both within the country and from abroad. At the time, the European Union seemed the likely destination for a people who were clearly turning towards the West.

Now that the euphoria is gone, today it seems clear that the protagonists of the Orange Revolution were not up to the challenge. The disillusionment of the people with the way in which the country is being run is also plain to see.

The election of the candidate beaten by Mr Yushchenko in December 2004 shows either a major split within the country, or a shift in popular feeling, with people now more favourable to the Russian influence.

I believe it is important that the European Union should maintain its ability to be seen as attractive to the Ukraine, and that it should use the various means at its disposal to do so. I hope that the Ukraine will persist and persevere with internal democratisation, and that, in terms of its past and its history, it will move towards convergence with the EU, a process that will end in its accession as a full member of the EU.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Following the disintegration of the Eastern bloc and the Union of Soviet Republics, the Ukrainian people and institutions have been strongly committed to the democratisation of the country and the construction of a modern society by developing a social, economic and political system that can consolidate the rule of law and respect for human rights, despite the difficulties that are normally inherent in a state that is in the process of regenerating its structural organisation and political identity.

As a reference area and a place for promoting peace and the economic, social and cultural development of its citizens, the European Union has a duty to take on a decisive role in the development of a democratic system within Ukraine, including strengthening the mechanisms for European integration. This will also help to ease regional conflicts within the country, which is of great geostrategic importance to the EU, in view of relations with Russia and Central Asia, particularly in terms of energy. In this process, I would also emphasise the contribution that this motion for a resolution has made to the integration into the EU of a large group of immigrant Ukrainians, along with promoting the role of young people and education in terms of social, economic and cultural progress within Ukraine.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Based on today's vote on the resolution on the situation in Ukraine, we welcomed not only that the presidential elections were conducted in accordance with democratic principles, but also the inauguration of the new president, whom we are expecting to pursue a policy of openness and cooperation towards the EU. We emphasised the importance of signing additional agreements in the energy sector, thereby guaranteeing energy supply security. We also welcomed with this vote the need to continue discussions with a view to setting up a favourable system for granting visas. Ukraine has been invited by the message conveyed today to continue working with us so that it becomes definitely committed to progressing along the path to democracy. We have reconfirmed with this vote what we have said on other occasions as well, that we must demonstrate an open approach through dialogue and firm commitments in order to give Ukraine the necessary encouragement to favour a pro-European development. However, Ukraine must show that it is a trustworthy partner for us.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), *in writing*. – I supported Amendment 2, tabled on behalf of the ECR Group, to the joint motion for a resolution on the situation in Ukraine, which voices concern that the Nord Stream pipeline project undermines the principle of solidarity in the EU's energy security and will be constructed to circumvent Ukraine. Even if not directly relevant to the current situation in Ukraine, I fully share the view that the Nord Stream project has been designed by the Russian Government as primarily a political project with a goal to divide Europe and isolate not only Ukraine but also some new Member States. This amendment is a reminder that the debate on Nord Stream has not ended but is to be continued. The EU, which is heading toward a common energy market with the implementation of an energy solidarity principle, cannot rely on a long-term relationship with a politically orientated state-owned monopoly that has already failed economically and is

defying the basic EU principles of open competition, transparency and separation of production, transportation and distribution.

Iosif Matula (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of the draft resolution tabled by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) because I believe that the EU must help Ukraine implement democratic reforms and European values, and guarantee human rights and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The new Ukrainian president won the elections standing on a programme guaranteeing rights for minorities, and the EU must support the effective, long-term implementation of this programme. With this in mind, the law for implementing the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages needs to be adopted and enforced. Previous measures which drastically restricted the ability of schools to teach in the minorities' mother tongues must be repealed. The representation of minorities in local, district, regional and central institutions in Ukraine must be improved. Respect must be guaranteed for all minorities' rights in accordance with European standards, including Russians, Poles, Tatars, Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians, Hungarians, Jews and Roma. No minority must be overlooked.

I wish to draw attention to the need to conserve and restore the cultural and historical heritage of the Chernivtsi Region, which is part of a Jewish, Germano-Austrian, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian cultural legacy. I believe that the conservation of this valuable European multicultural and multid denominational heritage, including cemeteries, monuments, buildings and churches in Northern Bukovina, must be a priority objective for cooperation between the EU and Ukraine.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The recent elections held in Ukraine, taking into account the statements by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, which considered that most international standards had been met, are a signal that this country is continuing to develop positively by moving towards future integration into the EU. However, it is crucial that the Ukrainian politicians and authorities are committed to bringing about political and economic stabilisation soon. For this to be achieved, the necessary constitutional reforms must be implemented, with consolidation of the rule of law, the establishment of a social market economy and renewed efforts to combat corruption and the improvement of the climate for business and investment.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The motion for a resolution on the state of affairs in Ukraine addresses the current state of affairs in that country and the situation around the presidential elections extremely well. It reminds Ukrainian politicians and government organs of the need for political and economic stabilisation, which can, in particular, be achieved by constitutional reform, a consolidation of the rule of law, the establishment of a social market economy, renewed efforts to combat corruption, and the improvement of the economic and investment climate. Nevertheless, in my view, the considerations with regard to its rapid inclusion in the free trade zone, in other words, the EU common internal market, go too far. Ukraine must steadily build up and strengthen its economy, and come to an agreement over its own needs. For all Ukraine's European orientation, we must not forget or disregard that country's deep-seated roots in Russia's sphere of influence, and we must take that into consideration. For the reasons I have set out, I abstained from the vote on the motion for a resolution.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The text contains some good statements, such as the condemnation of the Communist regime. On the other hand, I consider that a far-reaching easing of visa restrictions and a rapid inclusion of Ukraine in the common market is not sensible. It is for that reason that I abstained from voting.

Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) Mr President, I supported the resolution by the European Parliament concerning the situation in Ukraine. Among other things, I believe that we should take very seriously the decision of President-Elect Yanukovich to come to Brussels for his first foreign visit. This is a clear sign that Ukraine is continuing its integration with the European Union. I consider it important for the European Union to show support for Ukraine in the present situation, by concluding an association agreement and also guaranteeing visa freedom, provided that Ukraine fulfils its objectives. The doors of the European Union must stay open for Ukraine.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) I welcome the fact that the presidential elections in Ukraine were held in accordance with democratic standards. At the beginning of 2010, Ukrainian democracy has shown that it is alive. The high electoral turnout is particularly worthy of note. Today, the outcome of the Ukrainian election itself is not the cause of reservations which might result in it being challenged in court.

However, the European Union must not stop at expressions of approval for the way the elections were conducted. It is essential to offer Ukraine a European perspective in several steps. The first step should be participation in the Eastern Partnership, and the last should be membership of the European Union. The European Union must maintain an open-door policy towards Ukraine. The degree of integration with different communities is a matter for Ukraine to decide – this should depend on a sovereign decision of Ukrainian society.

An improvement in relations between Ukraine and Russia is in the vital interest of the European Union. For the consequences of bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia also concern EU Member States. I welcome the announcement of an improvement in these relations.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), in writing. – (LT) The presidential elections in Ukraine complied with international election standards. The country has taken a step towards European democracy. This is proof that Ukraine increasingly feels itself to be part of the community of European democratic states.

Let us hope that the new Ukrainian President will be a reliable partner with whom we can cooperate to strengthen stability and economic development in Eastern Europe together with other neighbouring states. One of the most important practical steps in EU relations with Ukraine is the simplification of the visa regime, the end goal of which is the abolition of visas for citizens of Ukraine travelling to the EU.

I voted for this resolution because it takes into account the positive changes in such an important neighbouring state of the EU, although there still remain many complications and tensions between various government institutions in this country.

Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa (PPE), in writing. – (PL) During this plenary session we voted on the European Parliament resolution on the situation in Ukraine. I endorsed the resolution, because it is a very important declaration of our institution which testifies to the fact that we are carefully following the development of democracy in Ukraine. The resolution gives a generally good assessment of the course of the presidential elections, and calls for efforts to ensure the political and economic stability of the country. A key point is that it is essential to strengthen cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, especially in the area of energy. From my point of view, there were two controversial amendments. The first concerned minority languages. I voted against this amendment, because it increased the possibility of using Russian instead of Ukrainian. The second amendment was the one about the Nord Stream pipeline. In this case, I voted in favour of the amendment, because I wanted to manifest my opposition to construction of this pipeline.

Motion for a resolution RC-B7-0123/2010

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The European Union campaigned for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to be set up and has undertaken, along with Member States, to play an active, high-profile role to support an effective body which deals with the current challenges facing human rights. The new institutional structure created following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon offers the opportunity to improve the coherence, profile and credibility of the EU's actions as part of the UNHRC. This is why it is important for the EU to adopt a common, consolidated position during the 13th session of the UNHRC with regard to all the matters which will be discussed. The EU must have an effective influence as part of the UN's extended system and remain committed to finding a common position, as well as increase flexibility on less important issues to enable it to respond more quickly and effectively in negotiations on fundamental issues. Above all, it must be actively committed to creating dedicated UNHRC mechanisms for responding quickly and effectively to human rights crises in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing. – Human rights are still violated in many countries and it is unfortunate that grave violations sometimes are not addressed timely and properly by the international community. We are lacking a coordinated approach on the international stage. The EU's role as a global player has increased in recent decades and the newly established European External Action Service under the Lisbon Treaty could be instrumental in helping the Union to act more effectively to meet global challenges and to address human rights violations in a more coherent, consistent and efficient manner. The EU now has a great opportunity to strengthen its role in the UN Human Rights Council and should fully use it to increase visibility and credibility of EU actions in the area of human rights.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), in writing. – (IT) The compromise resolution put to the vote in this House unfortunately contains passages that prevent me from voting in favour. The UNHCR is a political body that is subject to 'extreme politicisation', as is acknowledged in the text of the resolution. However, we could have – I believe – said much more, especially since we are dealing with a subject that is sensitive and important to so many

of us, namely human rights. Upon reading the text, I note an unfortunate weakness – perhaps not for the politics of diplomacy, but certainly for that of values – and that is the lack of determination when criticising the well-known aspects that make the UNHCR a very controversial body. We could have, in fact, been more decisive, speaking out more strongly against Iran's candidacy in the next Council elections. There is no specific reference to the senseless composition of a Council in which there sit too many members who are scarcely qualified to lecture on human rights, and who evidently have even fewer credentials to be able to judge or to try anyone. My vote is therefore one of abstention and of scepticism about this text: I am abstaining in the hope that Parliament will take off its diplomatic hat – it is not its job to be diplomatic – and embrace more courageously the battle for values and for human rights.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I abstained, despite the fact that the motion for a resolution contains positive elements, because important amendments tabled by the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left were voted down and, as a result, the content was inadequate. The European Union must support efforts by the UN to ensure that human rights are respected throughout the world. It must take centre stage in this sort of initiative, all the more so nowadays, when infringements tend to be the rule under autocratic regimes which engage in 'capitalist violence' in order to impose their antisocial policies. The European Union must re-examine its relations with the state of Israel, taking serious account of Israel's military operations on Palestinian territory and of attacks on the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to eventually acquire its own homeland. The European Union must resign from US 'democracy export' campaigns and create a framework for international relations with respect for the rules of international law and an enhanced role for the UN.

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE), in writing. – (SV) The Swedish Conservatives have today, 25 February 2010, voted in favour of the joint resolution on the 13th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, B7-0123/2010. We would, however, like to point out that we believe that EU Member States should be urged to denounce violations of human rights in general and that it is regrettable that the United Nations Human Rights Council has not managed to deal sufficiently quickly with serious human rights situations in other countries not mentioned in the resolution either, for example Cuba, as well as other countries.

Vasîlica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I must emphasise that compliance with international human rights legislation and humanitarian legislation by all parties, in every circumstance, remains a vital condition for establishing a just and lasting peace throughout the world.

I believe that at European Union level, concerted action by both the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Member States, which are calling for a strong common position, would guarantee that those who are guilty of violations of international human rights legislation and international humanitarian legislation are held to account.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), in writing. – I voted in favour of the resolution on the United Nations Platform for Action for Gender Equality, which identifies key steps required for the European Union to meet strategic objectives on equality between women and men. There is a clear need for the Commission to step up efforts to compile comparable data on critical indicators for the follow-up to the Platform for Action, and to translate it into regular reviews of gender mainstreaming initiatives across a range of policy fields. It is especially important to monitor, and act on, the gender dimension of poverty, violence and the needs of girl-children. The follow-up to the Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010 must take into consideration the long-term consequences of the economic crisis and climate change in a society that is getting older and ethnically more diverse. Sexual and reproductive health and rights need to be acknowledged and furthered in Europe and at a global level. The European Union should now become party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a legal step made possible by the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on the 13th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The new institutional structure of the EU offers a unique opportunity to increase the coherence, visibility and credibility of the EU within the UN Human Rights Council. The activities of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will also help to enhance the EU's ability to cooperate with countries from other regional blocs, with a view to stopping human rights violations, including violence directed specifically against women and children.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The politicisation of the Human Rights Council and the ongoing blockade against those who have taken a stronger stance in condemning human rights violations in various parts of

the world justify a change in the Council's structure and way of operating. The candidacy of Iran that has been announced is yet another sign that the path taken by this body may be lacking credibility and security, and that countries with a history of repeated human rights violations can use membership of the Council to try to whitewash their own violations.

The European Union must actively participate in the work of the Council, while remaining aware of its limitations and problems, and try to impart a balanced, yet strict and exacting, view of what respect for human rights should be. If it does this, it will be capable of meeting its own responsibilities in this matter.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a platform specialising in universal human rights and a specific forum dealing with human rights within the UN system. The promotion and safeguarding the universality of human rights is part of the EU's legal, ethical and cultural *acquis* and one of the cornerstones of its unity and integrity.

I am sure that the Member States of the EU are opposed to any attempt to undermine the concepts of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. I expect that there will be active participation from the Member States in the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities and the annual meeting on the rights of the child ... I would like to stress the importance of the 13th session of the UNHRC, which will be attended by ministers and other high-level representatives. Its agenda includes the economic and financial crisis and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Finally, I welcome the re-engagement of the United States in UN bodies and its subsequent election as a member of the UNHRC, as well as its constructive work on freedom of expression in the 64th UN General Assembly.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We very much agree with the concept mentioned in the report, regarding the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. However, based on these same assumptions, it is necessary to stress the irreconcilable contradiction between this view and the severe attack on the rights of workers and of the people, caused by the crisis of the capitalist system, including high unemployment rates, increased poverty and increasingly difficult access to good quality public services at affordable prices. Unfortunately, the majority in Parliament did not take proper account of this contradiction.

We regret the rejection of the proposals made by our group, particularly the following:

- points out that the Member States of the UN should promote food sovereignty and food security as an instrument for reducing poverty and unemployment;
- welcomes the fact that a report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the violations of human rights in Honduras since the *coup d'état* is on the agenda of the 13th session; calls on the EU Member States to work for and support a strong condemnation of the *coup d'état* and for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in that country;
- expresses its concern at the situation in Colombia, particularly the discovery of thousands of unidentified dead.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the resolution on the 13th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, firstly to very warmly welcome the initiative to have the UNHCR put at the top of its agenda the impact of the global economic and financial crises to the realisation of all human rights. I also think it is important to highlight the need for a strong EU common position on the follow-up to the fact-finding mission on the conflict in Gaza and Southern Israel; it is imperative, in this regard, that the recommendations included in the Goldstone report be implemented. Finally, Iran's candidacy in the UNHRC elections to be held in May 2010 is of particular concern and must be followed up with strong EU action to prevent countries with a dubious human rights record from being elected.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) As the Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body whose main purpose is to address human rights violations, and given that one of the cornerstones of European unity and integrity is respect for and safeguarding of the universality of human rights, I would like to express my encouragement for the UNHRC, hoping that it continues to combat all forms of discrimination.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) Our resolution is addressed to the UN Human Rights Council, an institution that one would have hoped to promote to the rank of the world's enforcer of respect for rights, values and the most fundamental freedoms. I use the conditional tense because the UNHCR's legitimacy is more than undermined by its lack of impartiality.

Now all of a sudden, we have the added issue of Iran's candidacy. This is a provocation. This state, this government, this president, scorn the rights of men and women. At least 346 of the country's citizens, including minors, were either hanged or stoned to death in 2008. The trials there are farcical. Torture is used. There is a complete absence of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of the press. Minorities, particular the Baha'is, are persecuted. Since the presidential elections of June 2009, any form of demonstration has been bloodily and systematically repressed. I could go on.

The world needs governance that is based on universal values. If the UN wishes to be the forum for this dialogue, it must ensure that its bodies are objective. Iran's candidacy is much more than a test of the UN's credibility; it is a test of its viability.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the final text of the resolution, among other reasons, because it kept the paragraphs related to the joint study related to the existence of secret detention centres, the necessary implementation of the recommendations of the Goldstone report and the ICC, and because it included also the amendment on Western Sahara tabled by GUE. I am also glad that the request made by Brok to have a separate vote on the paragraph dealing with the defamation of religion was rejected and that the paragraph stated as follows:

10. Reiterates its position with regard to the concept of 'defamation of religions' and while recognising the need to fully address the problem of discrimination of religious minorities, considers that the inclusion of this concept in the Protocol on complementary standards on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination is not appropriate; calls on UN Member States to fully implement the existing standards on freedom of expression and on freedom of religion and belief;

We wanted to keep this sentence because we are of the opinion that we do not need a new legislation at the UN level which should deal with the concept of defamation of religions as we already have international standards, notably the protocol mentioned preventing discrimination of religious minorities.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) EU policy on respect for human rights is one of the most important values which we are putting into practice. Community policy on respect for human rights includes protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It attaches significant importance to support for the rights of women, children and national minorities and, in particular, to combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. It is very dangerous when legislation which discriminates against minorities is used to violate their right to freedom of religion or when it restricts their access to education and employment, thus restricting their right to work, which, in turn, restricts their right to have an adequate standard of living. The Union's work in this area to date gives us the right to demand respect from others for high standards in the field of democracy and human rights.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) On the subject of human rights, at all levels and in all areas of the EU, it must be stressed that our duty as MEPs is not just to criticise and prepare resolutions on third countries, but to also closely observe EU Member States, paying attention to even the slightest negative phenomena which violate human rights. In cases where human rights are violated, the European Parliament prepares a resolution which is addressed to the appropriate country. Before we criticise others, we must first stop human rights violations within the EU, and then we will be able to criticise others and try to help them as much as possible.

Anna Záborská (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I did not support this resolution because it fails to highlight the importance of the human rights of Christian minorities in the Middle East. I regret the lack of courage shown when it comes to condemning the attacks on Christian minorities in the Middle East and to referring this problem to the Human Rights Council. The General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2009 as the 'International Year of Human Rights Learning', and the EU has declared 2010 as the 'European Year for Combating Poverty'. We should remember that the UN has recognised extreme poverty as being a violation of human rights. In the marble of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe buildings, we have engraved the leitmotif of 17 October – the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty: 'Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty. Father Joseph Wresinski'. Our resolution fails to express our deep concern about extreme poverty as a violation of human rights. That is why I am inviting the members of the European Fourth World Committee to send a letter along these lines to the delegates of the UN General Assembly expressing Parliament's concern in this area.

Motion for a resolution B7-0118/2010

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) Equality between women and men is a fundamental right and common value of the European Union. It is also a prerequisite for achieving the EU's objectives of economic growth, employment and social cohesion. Although significant progress has been made in terms of achieving the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, gender inequality and stereotypes persist.

I believe that the review of the Lisbon Strategy must focus more on gender equality, set new objectives and strengthen the ties with the Beijing Platform for Action so that Member States achieve concrete results through specific policies. This is why better promotion is required of the exchange of experience and good practice between Member States in all areas affected by the Beijing Platform for Action.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of the resolution for the Beijing +15 – UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality. Fifteen years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the European Parliament is debating today the progress made globally in terms of gender equality. Equal opportunities for men and women is one of the European Union's fundamental values. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union highlights a number of values shared by Member States: pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and gender equality. Even though considerable progress has been made in certain areas and industrial sectors, there are still inequalities which persist. In this respect, the European Union must continue to make efforts to resolve these issues. Equality must be promoted in every area. At European level, when devising strategies for combating the economic crisis and the impact of climate change, the European Commission must also take into account the effect these strategies have on women. The resolution encourages the development of the strategies and instruments required to establish the situation on gender equality devised by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution on Beijing +15 – UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality, as the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform have not been achieved and inequality and gender stereotypes persist, with women remaining in a position subordinate to men in the areas addressed in the Platform.

We regret the lack of timely, reliable, comparable data, at both regional and EU level, for the indicators decided on for the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, including women and poverty, violence against women, institutional mechanisms, women and armed conflict and the girl child. The Commission must develop further the annual review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and use the indicators and analytical reports effectively as a contribution to different policy fields, as well as a basis for new initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality. We would like to reiterate the need for systematic implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in legislative, budgetary and other important processes, and of strategies, programmes and projects in different policy fields.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this resolution, as we must develop further the perspective of gender equality throughout the European Union. The European Commission should prepare a strategy of action for gender equality guidelines and take into account the economic and financial crisis, sustainable development, as well as current guideline priorities, equal economic independence for women and men, combining work, family and private life and equal participation of women and men in decision making.

At present, there is a distinct lack of data on gender equality, violence against women and institutional mechanisms. It is very important that the Member States cooperate as closely as possible with the European Institute for Gender Equality, one of whose tasks is work with comparable data. The institute will keep statistics, research will be carried out, the goal of which will be to provide analyses of gender equality matters and studies will be carried out into data indicator statistics and data explanation. The aims laid down in the institute's work programme should particularly help implement the indicators set out in Beijing.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Gender equality is a fundamental principle in our times, but gender inequality persists, and the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform are still a long way from being achieved.

I welcome the motion for a resolution to be voted upon today in plenary, as it is an incentive for improving institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming in development cooperation is essential for promoting a more prosperous, fairer and richer society.

I would like to emphasise the importance of the role that women play in science and technology. Women are increasingly present in areas of scientific research, but they remain a long way from the top of their careers and the centres of decision making. Taking advantage of this potential is essential for promoting a fair balance and for supporting growth and employment.

It is crucial to consider gender mainstreaming in different policy fields as one of the pillars of a more prosperous, fairer and richer society.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) As a staunch defender of human rights and the principle of equality, I would not undermine initiatives that aim to protect the rights of women and girls. Such rights are often severely violated in a world where women are still the main victims of crimes against their physical wellbeing and sexual self-determination.

However, gender equality can never for an instant mask the natural, social and cultural difference between the sexes; equal rights are not the same thing as equal treatment. Men and women need to be treated fairly, giving them the same rights but taking their respective needs into account. In the case of women, this is particularly pertinent in areas such as maternity support, the reconciliation of work and family life and special protection against crimes that are mainly committed against women and children, such as sexual exploitation, human trafficking or abuse.

Finally, I would stress that any EU initiative in this area cannot attempt to give women the right to abortion in the name of sexual and reproductive health; this must remain a matter for the individual Member States alone to decide.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union, and is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Thus, the Union has a specific mission of promoting and mainstreaming equality between men and women. There is no doubt that the unfortunate situation of gender discrimination continues to exist today, in both developing and developed countries – and, specifically, in the European Union – at all social, economic and cultural levels. To effectively combat this phenomenon, it is vital to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for identifying problems and collecting information without coming up against obstacles or political constraints, so as to establish causes and consequences in a clear and sustained way in order to effect a complete response. This structural problem is an obstacle to progress and the development of communities in particular, and humanity in general.

I believe that eradicating domestic violence should be a top priority. In order to do this, it will be vital to ensure cultural, social and economic equality between men and women. The economic and financial crisis, the impact of climate change and an ageing society are all factors that the European Commission and the Member States must take into account in actions and policies that aim to promote gender equality.

Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE), *in writing*. – (SV) The Swedish Conservatives have today, 25 February 2010, voted in favour of the resolution on Beijing +15 – UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality, B7-0118/2010. We would, however, like to emphasise that we do not believe that a chapter on equality should be included in the revision of the Lisbon Strategy 2010, as this is already covered in the Treaty of Rome and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. We would also like to point out that we believe that women should have power over their sexuality and reproduction. We believe in the ability of individuals to make decisions concerning their own lives; the EU should not interfere in this area. Increased equality is one of the EU's great challenges where Sweden's progress can inspire the other Member States of the EU.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I supported this resolution because, 15 years after the Beijing World Conference on Women, we have to acknowledge that too little progress has been made in relation to gender equality and that sexist stereotypes still persist in numerous areas such as employment, education and politics. I also supported the reference to the need to improve the sexual and reproductive health of women both in Europe and globally, and the encouragement that needs to be given to fathers to share family responsibilities, by taking advantage of parental leave, for example. Finally, with regard to the revision of the Lisbon Strategy, priority will have to be given to the gender equality goal, which will have to make a real impact in national social protection and inclusion measures.

Livia Járóka (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) The objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action accepted 15 years ago have not been fulfilled to this day, and in most areas relating to equality between women and men, there has hardly been any slight measure of progress. It is unfortunate that at both Member State and European Union level, little emphasis is placed on combating the extreme poverty and multiple discriminations that afflict women.

We need to harmonise much more closely the Beijing objectives adopted within the framework of the United Nations and the implementation of the new EU roadmap for equality between men and women. In this European year for combating poverty and social exclusion, it is particularly important that women who are barely above the poverty line should receive suitable protection, since a change in their employment or family situation – such as job loss, divorce, widowhood and even childbirth – means that the danger of impoverishment threatens them exponentially. It is gratifying that the programme of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency places great emphasis, on the one hand, on following up on the implementation of the Beijing objectives, and, on the other, declares its intention to take a comprehensive approach to preventing and combating the poverty that affects women and children. These perspectives will, hopefully, also be addressed with due seriousness at the UN meeting scheduled for early March. In order to assess and review policies aimed at achieving equal opportunities between men and women, reliable data broken down by gender is necessary, and it would also be worth considering the introduction of standardised, common indicators for measuring gender inequality.

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of paragraph 9 of the resolution on the Beijing +15 UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality, upholding women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Sexual and reproductive rights are based on universally recognised rights to bodily integrity, non-discrimination, and the highest attainable standard of health. These rights are enshrined in international law (including Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights where States Parties recognise 'the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health' and Article 12 of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women on eliminating 'discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning'). Consensus documents (such as the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action and 1995 Beijing Platform for Action) also illustrated governments' commitment to (women's) sexual and reproductive rights. Many in my electorate in Romania share this perspective.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Inequalities between men and women on various levels, whether by profession, sector or various stereotypes, have become blurred over the years. Equality between men and women in the EU is increasingly a reality, and although there are still cases of discrimination, we are beginning to see very positive developments.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The defence of women's rights is important to me, too. However, I do not consider the use of quotas, so-called positive discrimination, to be sensible. It is qualifications that should be decisive here, not gender. This should be the basic rule for men and women alike. It is for that reason that I abstained from voting.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this motion for a resolution because it is compulsory to implement gender equality in all fields.

Regarding Romania, these fifteen years, progress has been made only in some of the areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. The presence of women in Romanian politics on the level of decision making after the 2009 election is around 11% in the Parliament, and only one woman was appointed in the government. Male violence against women, human trafficking and women representation in decision-making bodies are priorities we should strongly address.

We can address all this only if women will decide for women! Not including women in all social and political executive bodies would be wasting 50% of intellectual capacity as well as failing in representing truly the interest of all citizens.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the final text of the resolution because it included our petitions to the EU Commission to take into account in its 2010-2014 roadmap not only the economic and financial crisis but also the impact of climate change on women; on the fact that inequality and gender stereotypes in the EU still persist with women remaining in a position subordinate to men in the areas addressed in the Beijing Platform; and because it promotes gender equality especially in terms of paternity leave.

Marc Tarabella (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted for this resolution because it highlights the progress still to be made by the 189 states that are signatories to the Beijing Platform for Action if real equality between women and men is to be achieved. I particularly support the paragraph stressing that 'sexual and reproductive health and rights are an integral part of the women's rights agenda'. I would like to point out in this regard that, when my report on equality between women and men was adopted in 2009, the majority of MEPs supported the view that women had to have easy access to contraception and abortion.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I, together with my colleagues from the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left, voted in favour of Mrs Svensson's report on Beijing +15 – UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality. Her assessment presents a mixed picture.

True, progress has been made, but how can we be satisfied when there is still a gender wage differential of between 14% and 17.5%?

Furthermore, it is unacceptable that a majority of MEPs have adopted a highly ambiguous amendment⁽¹⁾ tabled by the European Conservatives and Reformists implying that women who have recourse to abortion are not making an informed and responsible decision. This is an indirect attack on the right to abortion.

Marina Yannakoudakis (ECR), *in writing*. – The Member States of the ECR have signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. We therefore feel that for the EU to 'become a party to the Convention' as a whole is unnecessary and we oppose the EU acting in this State-like way. Whilst the ECR Group places great importance on equality between all people, we oppose further legislation at EU level; we believe the gender equality issue is best driven at national level with the involvement of civil society within local communities. For these reasons, we have voted against the resolution.

Report: Vladimír Maňka (A7-0017/2010)

Alexander Alvaro, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Nadja Hirsch, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Holger Krahmer, Britta Reimers and Alexandra Thein (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) According to the resolution of the European Parliament on the draft general budget for the financial year 2010, adopted on 17 December 2009, a vote was taken today on the amending budget for the European Parliament, following the revised calculations made by the Parliamentary administration. The FDP in the European Parliament abstained, because there was a paragraph in the package of amendments concerned that we could not reconcile with our convictions. The FDP had already expressed its opposition to an increase in the secretarial allowance to EUR 1 500 during the discussions in committee. It is out of the secretarial allowance that MEPs' assistants are paid. The FDP considers that the argument that more money is needed due to the additional work that MEPs have to do with the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is unsound, as there is nothing in past experience to support this. Certainly, due to the Treaty of Lisbon, which has just come into force, Parliament will overall need extra capacity for legislative work, but with the introduction of the Assistants' Statute from the beginning of the current parliamentary term, there is still no proof that MEPs actually need more assistants. For this reason, there are grounds for concern that further demands and supplementary increases, or an extension of office capacity, will follow. For this reason, the FDP in the European Parliament abstained.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) Presented for the first time in the meeting of the Committee on Budgets of 25 January 2010, the Maňka report is characterised by three critical points, which are responsible for my decision to abstain from the vote.

Firstly, the sudden and belated discovery, in respect of the signing of the 2010 budget in December 2009, that the 20% limit for expenditure under 'heading 5' had been exceeded. The agreement to shift the problem from December to January, the desire not to publicise the budgetary burden of the Treaty of Lisbon, and the hasty manner in which the issue was raised, without any scope to demand, where necessary, more efficient use of the resources currently available, have led to a real distortion of the facts.

Secondly, I disagree with the decision to use the reserves earmarked for buildings policy to cover the new need for liquidity. This is a controversial issue that must be addressed in the coming months, once we are sure that we can count on having the necessary financial resources.

(1) Amendment 3 by Marina Yannakoudakis, on behalf of the ECR Group, to paragraph 9 ter (new): 'stresses that abortion should not be offered as a family planning method and that provision should be made in all cases for the humane treatment and counselling of women who have had recourse to abortion'.

Lastly, I believe that the sum of EUR 1 500 as a monthly allocation for Members' assistants seems inadequate, since the minimum threshold for the appointment of a new level I-accredited assistant is EUR 1 649.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon means greater powers for Parliament. Nonetheless, in a globalised world, issues are increasingly complex, and decisions need to be technically sound and backed up by science.

It is crucial that policy makers are aware of recent scientific developments, as these will allow them to make the best decisions.

This budget makes decisions with cuts to the buildings heading and an increase in technical support for Members, providing the necessary resources for Parliament to perform its duties well, with the scientific and technical backing that is so necessary in the 21st century.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted against this report, because the EU budget continues to constitute a minimum percentage of European GDP (0.97%), which does not cover the need to strengthen weak economies and societies and finance enlargement. The need for a bold increase in the budget, to at least 5%, is becoming more urgent, especially in the current economic crisis, which has hit the entire European Union, in order to address social needs and stop public spending cuts. It is within this framework that the problems of operational needs and the harmonisation of expenditure by the European Parliament and the European Union need to be addressed.

Jurgen Creutzmann (ALDE), *in writing*. – (DE) According to the resolution of the European Parliament on the draft general budget for the financial year 2010, adopted on 17 December 2009, a vote was taken today on the amending budget for the European Parliament, following the revised calculations made by the Parliamentary administration. The FDP in the European Parliament abstained, because there was a paragraph in the package of amendments concerned that we could not reconcile with our convictions.

The FDP had already expressed its opposition to an increase in the secretarial allowance to EUR 1 500 during the discussions in committee. It is out of the secretarial allowance that MEPs' assistants are paid. The FDP considers that the argument that more money is needed due to the additional work that MEPs have to do with the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is unsound, as there is nothing in past experience to support this. Certainly, under the Treaty of Lisbon, which has just come into force, Parliament will overall need extra capacity for legislative work, but with the introduction of the Assistants' Statute from the beginning of the current parliamentary term, there is still no proof that MEPs actually need more assistants. For this reason, there are grounds for concern that further demands and supplementary increases, or an extension of office capacity, will follow. For this reason, the FDP in the European Parliament abstained from voting.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for the Maňka Report which is the first step in amending the 2010 European Parliament budget seeking additional budgetary and human resources to enable the European Parliament to fulfil its enhanced role. The additional resources include an increase in the monthly assistance allowance available to MEPs to support their increased legislative role under the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty puts the Parliament on an equal footing with the Council as colegislator accounting for some 95% of legislative procedures. It now includes such areas as freedom, security and justice, agriculture, fisheries, research and structural funds. Parliament's consent must also now be given for the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements which require detailed expert examination. It is essential that MEPs have the staff necessary to do this work as required.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson, Marita Ulvskog and Åsa Westlund (S&D), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats believe that those committees that will gain a heavier workload with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon need to be reinforced. This justifies an increase in staff for Parliament's and the groups' secretariats in these committees. However, we do not share the view that we MEPs need more staff. Above all, we would have liked to have seen Parliament's resources being increased by means of redistributions and measures to increase efficiency, rather than the total budget being increased.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Given the new role of Parliament within the context of the Treaty of Lisbon and its new functions, and in view of the commitment made when the 2010 budget was approved, this increase in funds available for the running of Parliament makes sense, as it ensures that this body has all the material and human resources it needs to fulfil its new tasks in the new institutional framework with accuracy and excellence.

This increase in funds must not, however, jeopardise budgetary sustainability and the accuracy of financial statements, as this is crucial in any institution. Additionally, there must be accuracy and transparency in managing the funds made available under this budget.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) This amending budget for the financial year 2010 relating to Parliament's budget (Section 1 of the general EU budget) now has a value of EUR 1 616 760 399, which represents 19.99% of the initial heading 5, adopted at first reading. In this amending budget, we have reduced the buildings reserve from EUR 15 million to EUR 11 million.

The need for this budget has come about as a result of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Parliament is taking on new powers and new responsibilities. Our priority now is excellence in legislation. In order to secure this, it is important to provide the Members, committees and political groups with sufficient means. This amending budget fulfils legal and budgetary standards and good financial discipline. As the rapporteur of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) for this budget, I believe that budgetary discipline and trying to make savings is necessary now more than ever, throughout its implementation. I can therefore reaffirm the importance of developing a zero-based budget that will ensure further rigour and transparency, and I also appeal for information regarding Parliament's fixed expenditure as a matter of urgency. I must also insist on the need for long-term planning in buildings policy, with a view to ensuring budgetary sustainability.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) Yesterday, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Athens, and Greece was paralysed by a general strike in protest against the austerity plan imposed by the EU, the European Central Bank in Frankfurt and the IMF. It is true to say that Greece has not always been as rigorous as it should have been in the management of its public accounts and EU funds. However, it is scandalous that the main virtue of this austerity plan should be that it reassures the markets, these same markets that are currently speculating on the Greek debt and which caused this turmoil. These same markets from which the States, thanks to your ultra-liberal laws, have to borrow at high rates of interest. At the same time, under the pretext of an alleged increase in workload due to the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and of Parliament's supposed concern about the quality of its legislative texts, the MEPs are awarding themselves a 'small' budget increase to the tune of a few million euros so that staff can be recruited for the political groups! Therefore, apply your nit-picking checks to your own expenditure and be as rigorous as you insist the Member States must be! We will be voting against this text.

Sylvie Goulard (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The crisis is here, and it is true that a large number of companies and citizens are struggling. Nevertheless, I voted in favour of an increase in the parliamentary assistance package because the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon increases the responsibilities of the European Parliament: we have more work and more obligations to fulfil on behalf of our citizens. This increase will only benefit our assistants; MEPs themselves will not see any increase in their salaries.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – Along with my group, I gave conditional support today for an increase in the secretarial allowance at this stage in the procedure. This support is conditional on the evaluation of the use of this allowance, as called for in the Maňka report. Our final position on the increased allowance will be contingent on the outcome of this evaluation.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I confidently voted for this budget amendment. It is not a case of us asking for money for ourselves, as alleged by the press. However, we need to provide the institution of the European Parliament with the necessary resources to meet European citizens' expectations of this forum. I know that we are not only going through a hard time economically, but that the budget restrictions in many states are also huge. This budget is not even extravagant. Savings have been made and will continue to be made.

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (DE) I voted for the Maňka report, although I did not agree with the budget increase in the secretarial allowance for MEPs. In her explanation of our vote, Mrs Trüpel, who is the responsible member on behalf of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, put it on record on behalf of the whole group that our vote in favour is conditional on there being an evaluation of the secretarial allowance before the increase is put into effect. I consider both the other points – namely the increase in posts for committees and groups – to be sensible and necessary as a consequence of Parliament's new legislative powers under the Treaty of Lisbon. We Members wish to and will take these powers very seriously and thereby do justice to our role as the only elected representatives of European citizens.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – The approval and subsequent entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon have meant increased responsibility for Parliament, with the administrative burden that that entails. Given that legislative excellence is a priority for Parliament, the Members need to be given the material and human resources to make this a reality. This new budget must, however, respect the utilisation rates of the values under heading 5 (administrative provisions) of the multiannual financial framework (MFF), which were fixed at 20% of the value of that heading, so as to maintain budgetary sustainability.

Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (SV) In view of all the cuts being made throughout Europe, we need to show solidarity with those countries that finance the EU budget by not increasing our expenditure and I am therefore voting against the proposal for an amending budget concerning the European Parliament.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (NL) I voted against this report as it envisages an increase in the envelope for recruitment of and allowances for assistants by EUR 1 500 per month from 1 May 2010. Fortunately, an amendment tabled by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance provides for an evaluation of the system of allowances, in force since the 2009 elections, as it currently exists. Yet the increase in the secretarial assistance allowance is to take effect unconditionally, with no obligation to take account of the results of this evaluation. The report also envisages a strengthening of the parliamentary committees and the political groups. This operation costs EUR 13.3 million on an annual basis, EUR 8.832 million of which is for assistants' allowances.

This is a bad decision. It damages the reputation of this institution. It has not been thought through. No thought has been given to any further consequences. Where are the new assistants to be accommodated? Will it be in a new building? Will yet more costs be incurred? In addition, I fear that this money will be used in large part for the recruitment of non-accredited assistants under national wage terms. That very system has given rise to dirty tricks in some cases. Now we may be leaving the door wide open to abuse. Therefore, I urge a clear evaluation of the existing system in advance; only then can we take an informed decision.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has led to the adoption of a proposal to amend the 2010 budget, with a view to meeting the additional needs of Parliament in relation to it. Given that legislative excellence is a priority for Parliament, I would emphasise the importance of providing the Members, committees and political groups with the necessary means to achieve this objective, along with the means to cover their overall needs in relation to the long-term buildings policy.

Therefore, the amending budget for the financial year of 2010 now has a value of EUR 1 616 760 399, which represents 19.99% of the initial heading 5, adopted at first reading, and the buildings reserve has been reduced from EUR 15 million to EUR 11 million. I would like to emphasise the importance of the report's inclusion of the establishment of a zero-based budget, which ensures greater budgetary sustainability, and the need for this to be in accordance with the annual legislative programme. For the aforementioned reasons, I voted in favour of the document, which will allow Parliament to be given sufficient means to cover the expenses related to its new role following the Treaty of Lisbon.

Helga Trüpel (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The Greens/EFA Group gives conditional support to an increase in the secretarial assistance allowance at this stage of the procedure. For our group, the evaluation of the use of the secretarial allowance as asked for in the Maňka report is crucial. This evaluation should come in time for a decision by the budgetary authority on the corresponding amending budget later in spring. The group may reconsider its support for the increase in the assistants' allowance in view of the outcome of this evaluation and discussions within our group.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) I would really like to endorse the MEPs and, at the same time, express my concern that particularly at the time of the crisis, various allowances to both MEPs and employees in their teams are being increased. In particular, I would like to draw attention to those categories of expenses which are difficult to monitor or are not monitored at all. Precisely these categories of expenses should not be increased during the crisis.

Report: Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (A7-0014/2010)

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) The report supports the EU common fisheries policy which, in the name of protecting fish stocks, has resulted in the destruction of a large number of small fishing boats in Greece and in numerous small and medium-sized fishing enterprises being ousted from the profession, in the condemnation of numerous coastal areas to abandonment and unemployment and in the concentration of activities in the hands of large fishing companies. The monopoly friendly nature of EU policy is illustrated by the fact that 2/3 of Community funds have been channelled to big business (fishing

companies, fish farms, processing), while the remaining 1/3 has been given to poor and middling fishermen to break up their boats and leave the profession. Measures to replace/improve vessels have only benefited large companies. The report, like the Green Paper, apportions equal responsibility for the reduction in fish stocks to large fishing companies and small-scale coastal fisheries. It does not differentiate between the measures needed in fisheries areas and overlooks their individual peculiarities. The EU common fisheries policy serves the ambitions of the big fishing companies that will remain to plunder the wealth of the seas and supports big business in the fish farming sector. This policy, the only criterion for which is the profitability of capital, is resulting in the destruction of the marine environment and of ecosystems.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I welcome the launch of a new strategy aimed at resolving the issues relating to fishing in the European Union. Overfishing, illegal fishing, pollution and climate change are factors which are jeopardising marine ecosystems. This is why the concern for high-quality aquaculture in Europe will yield economic benefits and also ecological benefits at the same time.

It is vital for us to maintain the right balance between economic growth, fishing traditions in certain regional communities and the best fishing practices. The most important thing is for us to realise that the promotion of aquaculture which is sustainable and economically efficient in the long term is primarily dependent on how environmentally friendly we are.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing. – (LT) The fishing sector in Europe is experiencing hard times. Fishermen are losing their only source of livelihood, and this is particularly true in those EU regions where there are few social and economic alternatives. Therefore, I support wholeheartedly the Commission's proposal, set out in the Green Paper, that it is necessary to fundamentally and comprehensively reform fishing policy, thereby adapting this sector to the changing market. It is regrettable, but 27 years have passed since the creation of the common fisheries policy and this sector is not working as it should and problems are not being solved quickly enough. The problems of 2002 still remain and they have been aggravated even more by the latest events, linked to the economic crisis and the impact of climate change on fish stocks. The priorities of the reform of the common fisheries policy must remain the restoration of stocks, sustainable management and securing the subsistence level of fishermen. Fishing is very important to the whole of the EU, therefore it should not simply be seen as an activity, but as a sector which is a direct source of employment.

Gerard Batten, John Bufton, David Campbell Bannerman, Derek Roland Clark, William (The Earl of) Dartmouth, Nigel Farage and Paul Nuttall (EFD), in writing. – While this report points to a rather less awful CFP than the monstrosity we have now, it nevertheless recommends leaving fisheries under the predatory control of the undemocratic and anti-democratic 'European Union', and, for this reason, cannot be endorsed by UKIP.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The promotion of a common interest among producer organisations in observing the principles advocated by the European Union is becoming a key element in reforming the fisheries policy. The European Union cannot expect Europe's fishing fleets to be resized naturally, based on economic realities. Their overcapacity, eight years after the global summit on sustainable development, and the continuing decline in fish stocks, are additional reasons for a far-reaching reform of the common fisheries policy. However, it must not be forgotten that there are whole communities located in the coastal regions of the European Union's states whose existence revolves around fishing. As is also mentioned in the report on the reform of the common fisheries policy, this activity is part of the cultural heritage and traditions which no one wants to see lost.

A review of the common fisheries policy is in every Member State's interest so that the main objective adopted at the 2012 summit, which is to attain the level of fish stocks enabling maximum sustainable yield by 2015, can be met, thereby ensuring that the European Union is no longer obliged to import half of the fish it needs from other markets.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The fisheries sector is strategically important for the socio-economic wellbeing of coastal communities, local development, employment, and the preservation and creation of economic activity.

Ensuring sustainable development within this sector is vital, both on an economic and social level, but it is equally necessary to ensure the conservation of good environmental conditions in all EU marine waters.

The implementation of the CFP is directly linked to issues such as environmental protection, climate change, safety, public health, protecting consumers and regional development, internal and international trade,

relations with third countries and development cooperation, and it is essential to ensure a proper and careful balance between all these areas.

I would like to emphasise the need for a coherent European Research Area framework in support of a sustainable use of oceans and seas.

It is also important to consider the nature of the constraints affecting the outermost regions which, by reason of their permanent and pervasive character and joint presence, differentiate those regions from the Union's other regions with geographical disadvantages and/or demographic problems.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I voted against the report on the common fisheries policy, despite the fact that it contains a number of elements that represent a positive development compared with the current situation. Unfortunately, however, basic points of the report clash with the fact that marine resources are common public property which cannot be privatised and an amendment by the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left on this point was rejected. This particular report fails to combine the necessary protection of the marine environment, conservation of fish stocks and social and financial protection for fishermen, especially small-scale fishermen, with catastrophic consequences for the environment and viable fisheries and an adverse impact on both fishermen and consumers, who have to pay the final price for the product, with the profits benefiting large private companies rather than small-scale fishermen. The report does not succeed in taking real account of the various conditions prevailing in individual EU Member States and, consequently, does not succeed in making provision for the necessary, duly adjusted policies.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I wish to congratulate Mrs Patrão Neves on her excellent report on the reform of the common fisheries policy. The countless problems and challenges with the CFP were identified back in 2002, but have now been exacerbated by the economic and energy crises and by the damaging effects of climate change. If the CFP is to serve the interests of modern fisheries, it needs to introduce a set of thorough changes which will ensure a fair balance between the preservation of resources and the viability of the sector, opening the door to new management systems for the different types of fisheries within the EU.

I welcome the concern to decentralise and de-bureaucratise the CFP, and to regionalise fishery management within the limits set by the Treaty of Lisbon, and also the need to ensure that treatment is tailored to small-scale coastal fisheries and industrial fisheries, whilst respecting environmental, economic and social requirements. I would also stress the protection of the interests of Community fisheries. However, these require appropriate monitoring by national governments, which should make fisheries a strategic priority in order to ensure the economic and social viability of coastal communities.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I believe that plans need to be drawn up for managing and supporting the long-term recovery of fish stocks for all types of fishing and all geographical fishing zones within the European Union. Consideration must be given, first and foremost, to the huge differences which exist in Europe in terms of fishing. Greater responsibility must be given to fishing zones and improvements made to the traditional quota system. Europe needs to adopt a strong, joint approach to managing fisheries resources, which will include a continental and market dimension for the sector, as well as a catching sector and aquaculture, in accordance with the European Union's new integrated maritime policy and with its interest in sustainable growth in coastal regions.

William (The Earl of) Dartmouth, Nigel Farage and Paul Nuttall (EFD), in writing. – While this report points to a rather less awful CFP than the monstrosity we have now, it nevertheless recommends leaving fisheries under the predatory control of the undemocratic and anti-democratic 'European Union', and, for this reason, cannot be endorsed by UKIP.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the Green Paper on the reform to the common fisheries policy because it made essential commitments that clearly helped to improve the initial proposal. I would like to emphasise the importance of introducing an environmental and social approach in seeking new management systems for fisheries resources, which will complement the current system, based on the principle of relative stability.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson, Marita Ulvskog and Åsa Westlund (S&D), in writing. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats voted against the report on the Green Paper and the reform of the EU fisheries policy. The majority in Parliament rejected the prioritising of ecological sustainability and voted in favour of an amendment stating that our policy towards countries outside the EU should be governed by the interests

of European fisheries. We find this unacceptable and therefore elected to vote 'no'. We are also sceptical about the fact that the European Parliament wants to provide more money for the common fisheries policy – this is something that we do not wish to be involved in, unless the purpose is to make a clear change to the policy.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I would like to begin by highlighting the excellent report produced by Mrs Patrão Neves. Fishing communities are currently undergoing a difficult period, marked by severe deterioration in fish stocks. This activity has an impact on the food supply for the general population and on the cohesion of the outermost regions of the European Union. For this reason, there needs to be an integrated and comprehensive approach to the reform of the common fisheries policy.

I believe that it is urgent and vital for the European Union to engage effectively in ensuring better conditions of economic sustainability for fishermen, within a framework that can safeguard the specific features of each region and that recognises that a different approach is required for small-scale fisheries. It is worth pointing out the recommendation of concrete measures such as the reduction in the number of middlemen in the chain between the producer and the consumer. On the other hand, this reform cannot be isolated from the sustainable use of marine resources in a technical and scientific process of assessment that has been thoroughly checked, and which will contribute to the conciliation of the sector and have a bearing on quality and food security for consumers. Within the context of changing the capacity of fisheries, I would like to emphasise the impact of modernising equipment on the professional dignity and safety of fishermen in a sector where loss of life is common.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The rejection by a majority in Parliament of the proposals that we tabled here, turning down the privatisation of fisheries resources, is indicative of the route that it is attempting to follow with the forthcoming reform of the CFP. Parliament not only fails to reject the Commission's proposal for the creation of (private) property rights for access to use a public good to be imposed; it also opens the way for that intention to be made official. This is an option that does not safeguard the sustainability of resources and it will inevitably lead to a concentration of activity among entities with greater economic and financial power all over the EU, seriously threatening small-scale, coastal fisheries that, in the case of Portugal, represent more than 90% of the fleet.

We did note some positive points in the report, some of which corresponded with the proposals that we tabled, but we cannot fail to note that overall, the report sticks to a markedly liberal approach, and one which greatly limits the sovereignty of the Member States over their marine resources. It also fails to provide a thorough response to one of the main issues that the sector is facing: income from work. We can but point out the rejection of the proposals that we tabled, aimed at improving marketing in the sector, which would increase the remuneration for the fishermen's work.

Marian Harkin (ALDE), *in writing*. – I am supportive of extending the coastal limits from 12 to 20 miles as one of the key reforms of the CFP. We must also end the practice of discarding vulnerable stocks. It is important to retain the current quota management system and I do not support mandatory privatisation of quotas.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The report contained many good and important elements and there is a consensus that the centralised, one-size-fits-all model of the CFP has been a disaster. A number of amendments tabled by myself were successful and thus, the report recognises relative stability, the need to incentivise conservation efforts and the success that has been national control within the 12-mile zone. However, the report goes on to state that historical rights should be reviewed. Fisheries management must be returned to the fishing nations; those fishing nations must not lose their historical rights. I therefore voted against a report which invites an attack on such fundamental traditional rights of access to fish stocks.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE), *in writing*. – (DE) A fundamental and comprehensive reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP) is to be welcomed, particularly with a view to the sustainable management of fish resources. This is to be enabled by refining and standardising the framework conditions, better controls on the part of the Member States, and simplifying the decision-making system. Even though Austria, as an inland country, is not directly concerned, the steadily growing consumption of sea fish is influencing fishing. We need practical and efficient solutions that offer the sector a basis for sufficient viability through good stock conditions, ensure supply to consumers and, at the same time, guarantee the maintenance of species diversity and safeguard the marine ecosystem as a whole.

Isabella Lövin (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – This report is a broad document that covers all the aspects of the CFP, from aquaculture to angling, from the Baltic Sea to fisheries agreements with third world countries.

The Greens are happy about many of the amendments to the report that we managed to get accepted, such as fundamental principles on demands for sustainability on those that will have the right to fish, demands of environmental impact assessments on fisheries operations, the statement that the EU should not compete with local fishermen under the fisheries agreements, but only be allowed to fish from a surplus of fish, and also the motion to all EU institutions to put illegal fishing on top of the international agenda in all relevant fora, to protect the oceans as well as food security. Unfortunately, there were also some completely unacceptable and contradictory paragraphs approved in the final text, such as the objective of the external parts of the CFP is to protect and promote European fisheries interests, that ecological sustainability should not be prioritised over social and economical sustainability and that all policy areas should contribute to fulfilling the CFP's objectives. This is why the Green group could not support the report, but abstained.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The common fisheries policy, which was last revised in 2002, is not yet sufficient to weather the vicissitudes of this sensitive sector. For this reason, it is necessary to analyse the new factors that are affecting the sector and find new solutions to make it completely viable, particularly in economic, social and environmental terms. I therefore recommend that new measures be taken to allow the fishing sector to escape from its current perilous situation.

The fisheries industry is very important in the EU. It is therefore vital that the new CFP takes account of the rational and responsible management of resources, and that it concerns itself with protecting marine resources and maintaining the way of life of those who have always earned their living from fishing. The new CFP needs to be capable of resolving productivity problems within the sector, stabilising markets and ensuring a good standard of living for families who are dependent on this sector. However, this sector should be analysed as a whole, not in sections, so that we can integrate all its problems and vicissitudes in order to resolve them to the satisfaction of all those involved, and overcome the main problems affecting it: overfishing, overcapacity, overinvestment and wastage.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) That fishing has a long tradition in Europe, and, one hopes, also will have in the future, is welcome. Developments in these last few years certainly indicate that working in this sector of the economy is becoming fundamentally less attractive. The reason for this is that groups of companies with their masses of fish products are pushing retail prices down so far that small fishing businesses cannot compete. As a result of these circumstances, this sector is increasingly becoming the province of workers from third countries. On account of the fact that this motion for a resolution does not sufficiently deal with this issue, I voted against it.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I abstained in the final vote on the Neves Patrão report because it contained both positive and negative paragraphs. In one side, agrees that priority access should be given to those who fish in the most environmentally sustainable way, leading to fewer discards, more jobs and less energy use, and stresses that the right to fish must be based on environmental and social criteria, rather than on who caught the most fish 30 years ago. It is years of overfishing that has led to the current crisis, so it is absurd to let the same fleets continue the damage. Other positive points include making ecological sustainability the basic premise of the CFP and the recognition that EU fleets must no longer overfish in the waters of developing countries. Unfortunately, less constructive ideas are also in the report, such as a refusal to accept the destructive influence of subsidies. The report also declares the CFP to be the dominant policy in the EU, with environment and development policies being subservient to it. It is this 'preserve the fishing industry at all costs' attitude that has led to the destruction of the marine ecosystem and the fishing communities that depend upon it.

Britta Reimers (ALDE), in writing. – (DE) The German members of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe voted differently from the group as a whole on two points. The first concerns Amendment 3 from the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance. The FDP members voted against, because a radical devolution of fisheries policy such as proposed in the motion with the transfer of powers and responsibility to Member States and to local decision makers cannot be reconciled with the European common fisheries policy. The idea here is precisely to find common forward-looking solutions at an EU level. FDP members supported Amendment 33 because it supports the important principle of relative stability, which is important for Germans. This concerns the basis for quota allocation.

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The European fishing industry is sailing through troubled waters: fish stocks are plummeting, 400 000 European fishermen and their families are worrying about their future and wondering about the effectiveness of the common fisheries policy (CFP) which, until now, has provided them with a safety net.

In the light of the structural problems identified, namely overfishing, underinvestment, overcapacity of the fishing fleet and waste (how many tonnes of fish are discarded into the sea every day because they are not fit for consumption?), reform of the CFP must be a top priority. Clearly, any reform must take account of the individual features of the various fishing areas and avoid at all costs a one-size-fits-all management model. The fishing techniques and vessels used in the North Sea are quite different from those used in the Gulf of Gascony. That is why the reform proposed by the Commission, which is based on regionalisation and which was adopted by Parliament this afternoon, is essential.

A responsible policy must also take account of the reality as presented by the figures: the EU accounts for approximately 4.5% of world fishing production and does not aspire to become a 'giant' in the sector. This is yet another reason why we must opt for small-scale, innovative and sustainable fishing.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), *in writing*. – The Commission's Green Paper on this issue was a damning indictment and an honest recognition that the common fisheries policy has not worked. On the contrary, it has contributed to a variety of problems which continue to have economic, social and environmental impacts. Only two weeks ago, this House voted in favour of suspending international trade in bluefin tuna because of the critically low stocks – a situation which is yet another sign that our current levels of fishing are unsustainable and have serious consequences for biodiversity and the future of the fishing sector. We must recognise that a new approach is needed. A decentralised policy with more funding will allow different regions to adapt and respond to their own circumstances – something that the previous 'top-down' policy prevented. This should lead to better management of stocks and have a positive effect on the marine environment. I fully support the Commission's commitment to whole-scale and fundamental reform, which has been rightly backed by the Committee on Fisheries. It is vital that we act to ensure that the European Union implements a truly sustainable fishing policy in order to protect stocks, the environment, and European jobs in the long term.

Peter Skinner (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported amendments put forward to change the common fisheries policy in a way which would have ended some of the distortions that exist already.

Increasing any funding for renewal of fleets or setting prices for fish centrally are particularly distorting and allow for increased use of subsidies.

Fishermen in the UK, particularly along the south coast in the 10 metre boats, are often badly affected by imbalanced quotas and subsidies to other national fishing fleets. Hastings and Rye MP, Mike Foster, has brought to my attention the need for the Marine Fishing Agency and the Commission to end discriminatory and distorting practices, especially in the catching of cod along the UK south coast, and particularly his own constituency Hastings and Rye, which we both represent.

Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – (NL) I abstained from the vote on the report on the common fisheries policy as it contains too many points that not only conflict with a number of other points in the report but also run counter to my political perspective on European fisheries policy. On the one hand, the report says that European fishing fleets may no longer overfish the waters of developing countries, but on the other, it says that the common fisheries policy always takes precedence over environmental and development policies. This position is patently at variance with the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 208 of which states that our foreign policy must not undermine the development objectives of poor countries. The policy proposed by Parliament most certainly benefits Europe, but outside European waters, Europe is championing only its own fishing fleets and not the local fish stocks and fishermen. The Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance has therefore abstained. In addition, whilst the report does recognise that there is a serious problem of overfishing and that sustainability must form the starting point for the policy, it fails to recognise that fleet capacity and the subsidy and quota systems are at the root of this problem. That explains our abstention.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The report on the Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy, which we adopted today, revises the economic, social and environmental aspects of this policy, with the aim of redefining the approach to resolving the remaining problems within the sector. I would like to reiterate that priorities such as greater efficiency in managing fishery resources and a financial support strategy for those who work in this sector, along with a guarantee of sustainability in the sector through the preservation of species, are essential in this reform, and they must be implemented at regional level. This document insists on reforms needed for the fishing industry, and which are enormously important in the outermost regions, particularly Madeira, where this activity is greatly important in local development and in the lives of the local people.

I would like to reiterate the ideas in the report relating to more active participation by the various actors at a national, regional and local level in terms of implementation and the technical measures to be taken within the fisheries sector. For all the above reasons, I voted in favour of this report, which will mark the beginning of a new stage in the European common fisheries policy.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) I voted against Mrs Patrão Neves's report because it rejects the amendments intended to establish a balance between environmental interests and the preservation of small-scale fisheries.

I also deplore the rejection of the amendments calling for an in-depth dialogue to be established with fishermen prior to this reform.

On this basis, I do not see how it will be possible to adopt a reform that is acceptable to fishermen and that does what needs to be done to preserve a common fisheries policy worthy of the name.

President. – The minutes of this sitting will be tabled for approval by Parliament at the start of the next sitting. If there are no objections, I shall immediately pass the motions adopted at today's sitting to the persons and agencies to which they are addressed.

10. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

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

12. Dates of forthcoming sittings: see Minutes

13. Adjournment of the session

(The sitting was closed at 12.50)