



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 April 2012

9043/12

PE-RE 5

NOTE

Subject: RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND OPINIONS adopted by the European Parliament at its part-session in Strasbourg from 17 to 20 April 2012

At the above mentioned part-session, the European Parliament adopted 27 acts as follows:

- 8 legislative resolutions;
- 16 resolutions; and
- 3 other acts.

This note contains a summary of those acts which are relevant to the Council.

1. Ordinary legislative procedure

First reading

a) (i) Coordination of social security systems

European Parliament legislative resolution of 18 April 2012 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004

(ii) Risk sharing instruments for Member States experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability

European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 as regards certain provisions relating to risk-sharing instruments for Member States experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability

For each of these acts the European Parliament:

- adopted its position at first reading;
- called on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it intended to amend its proposal substantially or replace it with another text.

2. Consultation procedure

a) (i) Common consolidated corporate tax base

European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the proposal for a Council directive on a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB)

(ii) Taxation of energy products and electricity

European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 2003/96/EC restructuring the Community framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity

For each of these acts the European Parliament:

- approved the Commission proposal as amended;
- called on the Commission to alter its proposal accordingly, in accordance with Article 293(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

- called on the Council to notify Parliament if it intended to depart from the text approved by Parliament;
- asked the Council to consult Parliament again if it intended to amend the Commission proposal substantially.

3. Consent procedure

- a) Accession of the European Union to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
European Parliament legislative resolution of 18 April 2012 on the draft Council decision on the accession of the European Union to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia

The European Parliament:

- consented to the accession of the Union to the Treaty.
- b) (i) EU-Central African Republic Voluntary Partnership Agreement on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the EU
European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Central African Republic on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the European Union (FLEGT)
- (ii) Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the EU and Liberia on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union
European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Liberia on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber products to the European Union

For each of these acts the European Parliament:

- consented to conclusion of the Agreement;
- called on the Commission to regularly report to Parliament on progress in the implementation of existing Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and in negotiating and implementing new VPAs.

c) EU-US agreement on the use and transfer of PNR to the US Department of Homeland Security

European Parliament legislative resolution of 19 April 2012 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the United States of America and the European Union on the use and transfer of Passenger Name Records to the United States Department of Homeland Security

The European Parliament:

- consented to the conclusion of the Agreement;
- considered that procedure 2009/0187(NLE) had lapsed as a result of the 2007 PNR Agreement between the European Union and the United States being replaced by the new PNR Agreement.

4. Other procedures

a) Draft Protocol on the concerns of the Irish people on the Treaty of Lisbon

European Parliament decision of 18 April 2012 on the European Council's proposal not to convene a Convention for the addition of a Protocol on the concerns of the Irish people on the Treaty of Lisbon, to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

The European Parliament:

- consented to the European Council's proposal not to convene a Convention.

b) Draft Protocol on the concerns of the Irish people on the Treaty of Lisbon

European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2012 on the draft protocol on the concerns of the Irish people on the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 48(3) of the Treaty on European Union)

The European Parliament:

- agreed with a European Council decision in favour of examining the proposed amendments to the Treaties.

c) Human rights in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy

European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2012 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter, including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy

The European Parliament:

General points

- emphasised the crucial role played by civil society in the protection and promotion of democracy and human rights; called for the designation of contact persons for civil society and human rights defenders in EU Delegations to be completed; stressed that EU contacts with civil society should be built on a genuine partnership, including systematic, timely and regular dialogue on an equal footing, which had to guarantee the active participation of civil society actors in the process of good governance; stressed that the information collected in this context had to be put to good use, but also protected by EU policies, particularly through democracy and human rights clauses; stressed the need to improve information sharing between the different actors involved in the defence of human rights across the world, in order to enable them to gain a better understanding of the activities and actions carried out, particularly with regard to specific cases, as well as the difficulties encountered; stressed, in this regard, that a civil society monitoring mechanism should be set up to ensure that civil society was systematically involved in the implementation of agreements and programmes; welcomed, at the same time, initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and encouraged EU institutions to take up more of the recommendations and declarations developed in the course of the EP-CSF in Brussels in 2009, in Berlin in 2010, and in Poznań in 2011 (para 10);

The 2010 EU Annual Report

- stressed the importance of the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the analysis and evaluation of the EU's policy on the matter; noted with regret that, for the first time since the presentation of Annual Reports on Human Rights in the World, the VP/HR and/or the European External Action Service (EEAS) did not present the report to the plenary at all this year and very strongly encouraged the VP/HR to present future such reports to Parliament and in timely fashion (para 18);
- welcomed the comprehensive section on violence against women and on the rights of the child in this year's Annual Report; drew attention, in this context, to scourges such as forced and sex-selective abortion, forced sterilisation and female genital mutilation; recognised the priority given to supporting efforts towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty and to judicial reform issues; endorsed the VP/HR's practical focus on EU action in international forums (para 20);

- urged the VP/HR in her drafting of future Annual Reports to consult actively, systematically and in a transparent fashion with Parliament, in a timely way and comprehensively with human rights NGOs, publicly inviting all interested organisations to provide their input, enhancing the use of social networks and media to consult as many organisations as possible; called on the VP/HR also systematically to consult with the Parliament and to report on the way that Parliament’s resolutions had been taken into account; asked the VP/HR more regularly to provide information on the stage of preparation of future Annual Reports whenever requested to do so by Parliament (para 22);

Mainstreaming

- noted the VP/HR’s statement to Parliament on 13 December 2011 following up on Parliament’s long-standing call for the creation of an EU Special Representative on Human Rights; requested that, if this function is established, the EU Special Representative should have cross-sectoral skills enabling the implementation of a cohesion policy aimed at integrating human rights in all EU policies; warned, however, against any attempt to isolate human rights policy from the overall external policy strategies through the creation of such a Special Representative (para 23);

EU action in the context of the United Nations

- reiterated its call on the Council to authorise the VP/HR to draft guidelines for regular consultations between the ambassadors of the Member States and the EU’s ambassadors, especially between those working at multilateral level in places like Geneva and New York, so that the EU could successfully pursue its UN agenda and act for the promotion and defence of human rights (para 30);

EU policy on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the fight against impunity

- welcomed the adoption at the Kampala Review Conference of amendments to the Rome Statute related to the crime of aggression and certain war crimes, and called on all Member States promptly to ratify these substantive amendments and to implement them as part of their domestic penal systems; in this context, called on the Council and the Commission to use their international authority in the interests of securing and strengthening the universality of the Rome Statute for an internationally agreed definition of acts of aggression in breach of international law; welcomed the EU’s pledges, in particular on the fight against impunity as a core value to be shared with our partners when entering into agreements, and called for their consistent implementation (para 34);

EU policies to support democratisation

- welcomed the plans to establish a European Endowment for Democracy (EED), as set out in the Joint Communication of the VP/HR and the Commission, the Council Conclusions of the 3101st and 3130th meetings, leading to the Declaration on the Establishment of a European Endowment For Democracy agreed to by COREPER on 15 December 2011, together with the efforts undertaken by a European Endowment for Democracy Working Group established under the auspices of the EEAS in cooperation with Member States and EU institutions; underlined the Endowment’s potential function, under Parliament’s oversight, as a flexible and expert tool to support actors striving for democratic change in non-democratic countries and countries in transition; urged the Council to ensure that, among its other actions, any such tool complements the activities of existing instruments, in particular the EIDHR, without creating unnecessary bureaucratic structures; stressed that the EU’s contribution to the EED budget had to be genuinely additional and had to be delivered in full conformity with financial rules, respecting the right of the budgetary authority to monitor and scrutinise (para 40);

Election support

- stressed the importance of a political support process not simply focused on the period immediately before and after elections, but based on continuity; welcomed the VP/HR’s attention to ‘deep democracy’, which linked democratic processes with human rights, freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion and belief, the rule of law and good governance; underlined that in this context the right to religious freedom should also be assigned a duly prominent role; pointed out that this right was in fact generally recognised as one of the most fundamental of all human rights (para 41);
- called on the Council, the Commission and the EEAS to develop a political strategy in relation to each EU election observation mission, followed up by an assessment of democratic progress two years after the mission, to be submitted during Parliament’s annual human rights debate with the VP/HR; welcomed the commitment of the VP/HR to focus in election observation on the participation of women and national minorities, as well as persons with disabilities, both as candidates and voters¹ (para 43);

¹ Human Rights and Democracy at the Heart of EU External Action - Towards a more effective Approach, Joint Communication, 12 December 2011

Human rights dialogues and consultations with third countries

- stressed that participation in a structured human rights dialogue, while welcomed, was too often used as a pretext to avoid discussion of these issues at higher political levels including partner summits; called on all EU institutions, the Member States and their embassies to make greater efforts to integrate these dialogues in all in-country EU external actions; stressed the need for transparency and genuine prior consultation of civil society organisations, as well as debriefing after the dialogues, in order to report on the results (para 45);
- reiterated that women’s rights should be an important part of the human rights dialogues conducted by the EU and of the EU’s political dialogue with third countries with which cooperation or association agreements had been signed, in line with the human rights clauses in these agreements, and that women’s participation in peaceful transitions – both at the negotiating table and in active roles – should be expanded; called on the Commission and the Council to take all appropriate measures in the event of any violation of these provisions (para 52);

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

- considered that the ‘Arab Spring’ had served to demonstrate the inadequacy of the EU’s policies hitherto to effectively support people’s strong desire for democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms, justice and accountable and representative government in countries where this was denied; welcomed, therefore, the Joint Communications by the Commission and the VP/HR on ‘A new response to a changing Neighbourhood’, expressing, among other points, the need for the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, and ‘A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’, and the approach taken of shared commitments and mutual accountability as regards the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, stronger incentive-based conditionality, differentiation of policies, the advancing of multilateral and sub-regional cooperation and the principle of further involving civil society; stressed that the ‘Arab Spring’ would become a paradox if it were to develop in a direction that denied the fundamental human rights of women, human rights defenders, religious minorities and other societal groups in the Arab Spring countries (para 60);

- reiterated its call on the VP/HR and the Member States to work towards a strong EU common position on the follow-up to the fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict, publicly demanding the implementation of its recommendations and accountability for all violations of international law, regardless of the alleged perpetrator, through the conduct of independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigations; took the view that there could be no effective Middle East peace process without accountability and justice (para 67);

External financial instruments, in particular the EIDHR

- noted that, in order to maximise coherence and effectiveness, a strategic approach was needed to combining different geographic and thematic instruments to protect and promote human rights, based on a solid analysis of the local context, eliminating current and avoiding future double standards; welcomed, in this respect, the commitment given in the 12 December 2011 Joint Communication on Human Rights and Democracy at the Heart of EU External Action: Towards a More Effective Approach to take the human rights country strategies into account in the programming and implementing cycles of the EU's assistance, and invited the VP/HR to draw up a more detailed methodology to implement this commitment (para 71);

Death penalty

- called on the VP/HR, the EEAS and the Commission to provide guidance on a comprehensive policy with regard to EU citizens facing execution in third countries, including strong mechanisms regarding identification, delivery of legal assistance and EU legal intervention (para 78);

Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment

- called on all Member States, the VP/HR and the EEAS to actively intervene on the issue of the human rights of detainees and to address the overpopulation of prisons in and outside the EU (para 83);

Human rights defenders

- welcomed the EU's political commitment to supporting human rights defenders, as a long-established component of the EU's human rights external relations policy, and the many positive examples of demarches, trial observations, prison visits, and other concrete actions undertaken by EU missions and delegations, such as regular, institutionalised meetings with human rights defenders, but remained concerned at the lack of implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders in some third countries; considered that the VP/HR should make recommendations for enhanced action to those missions where implementation had been noticeably weak (para 87);
- stressed the importance of systematic follow up to contacts with independent civil society, as well as more direct and easier access for human rights defenders to EU Delegations in third countries; welcomed the appointment of liaison officers, in the Delegations and/or in Member State embassies, for human rights defenders, and stressed that these should be experienced and appropriately trained officials whose functions are well-publicised both internally and externally; very much welcomed the fact that the VP/HR had indicated that she would always meet with human rights defenders in the course of her visits to third countries and called for this practice to be followed by all Commissioners with responsibilities in the external relations field, and for reports on these contacts to be made available to Parliament (para 90);
- welcomed the commitment made by the European Parliament to enhance the role of the Sakharov Prize and to strengthen the Sakharov Network, and stressed the important role of this network in, among other things, animating inter-institutional co-operation in support of human rights defenders worldwide; called on all EU institutions to exercise greater involvement and co-operation and, in this context, welcomed the reference to the Sakharov Prize in the Annual Report on Human Rights; repeated, however, its call on the Council and Commission to maintain contact with the Sakharov Prize candidates and laureates to ensure a continuing dialogue and monitoring of the human rights situation in their respective countries, to offer protection to those being actively persecuted, and to report back on this to the European Parliament (para 93);

Women and human rights

- welcomed the fact that the EU is a front-runner in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and accompanying resolutions; urged the Council, the Commission and the EEAS to step up efforts to bridge the gap between policy and practice, and urged Member States which had not yet adopted National Action Plans to do so as a matter of urgency (para 96);
- welcomed the creation of UN Women, and called on the EU to work closely with the institution at international, regional and national level to enforce women’s rights; called on the Commission and the Council to ensure that women in conflict situations have fair access to public healthcare systems and adequate gynaecological and obstetric care as defined by the World Health Organisation; stressed in particular the need to promote health education and appropriate programmes for sexual and reproductive health, which were a prominent part of the EU’s development and human rights policy towards third countries (para 97);
- welcomed the emphasis put on women’s empowerment by the VP/HR and called on her to institutionalise the EU Inter-institutional Informal Task Force on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) by providing it with a full-time chair, who would also act as the gender focal point in the EEAS, as part of allocating adequate human and financial resources to its task (para 100);
- called on the VP/HR to promote equal geographically and gender-balanced opportunities in the EEAS, as set out in the Staff Regulations; urged the VP/HR and the Member States to propose high-level women candidates for leadership functions in the EEAS and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions; welcomed the progress made in the context of CSDP missions in the appointment of Gender Advisors in almost all missions and in providing in-mission training; called on the Council to include a reference to UNSCR 1325 in Council decisions establishing mission mandates; recommended that Member States provide all military and seconded civilian staff with standardised gender training modules prior to the missions (para 101);
- strongly condemned forced marriage, a violation of human rights as set out in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; called on the Council to include the issues of ‘forced marriages’ and of “gender-selected” abortion in the EU guidelines on violence against women and girls; encouraged the Commission and the Council to develop data-gathering methods and indicators on these phenomena, and encouraged the EEAS to include these issues in the development and implementation of the human rights country strategies (para 104);

on the issue of ‘forced marriages’, requested that Member States adopt and enforce legislation banning forced marriage and develop a common definition, the establishment of national action plans, and the exchange of good practices (para 104 cont.);

Human rights, freedom of religion, and the persecution of Christians in the world

- condemned severely any persecution based on religion or belief; remained committed to the realisation of freedom of religion in all parts of the world as part of enhanced EU efforts in its bilateral and multilateral action; restated its concern regarding full and effective respect for the right to freedom of religion for all religious minorities in a number of third countries; reiterated its call on the Council and Commission to urgently develop a toolkit on the advancement of the right to freedom of religion or belief in the EU’s external policy, including mechanisms to identify infringements and actions that the EU should undertake in these cases, and to involve Parliament, civil society organisations, and academics in its preparation; welcomed the EU’s action in various UN forums against intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief and its unwavering and principled stance against the resolutions on combating defamation of religions; maintained that freedom of assembly was a vital aspect of the right to freedom of religion or belief, and stressed that registration of religious groups should not be a prerequisite for practising one’s faith; called on the EU Fundamental Rights Agency to provide Parliament with accurate and reliable data on infringements of freedom of religion or belief in the European Union, and to advise as to how these could be tackled (para 106);
- stressed in particular the importance of engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on this issue; called on the Council and the Commission to pay special attention to implementing the right to freedom of religion or belief in candidate and ENP countries, especially in the light of the Arab Spring; expressed its profound concern about the increasing number of acts of religious intolerance and discrimination in various countries; strongly condemned all acts of violence against Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other religious communities, as well as all forms of discrimination and intolerance based on religion and belief against religious people, apostates and non-believers; stressed once again that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion was a fundamental human right¹ (para 107);

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0489.

recognised the growing need in a number of countries for conflict transformation and reconciliatory efforts, including inter-faith dialogue at various levels, and urged the EU and VP/HR Ashton to address discriminatory and inflammatory content, e.g. in the media, and the issue of obstacles to the free profession of faith in its/her dialogues with third countries in the context of EU initiatives on human rights; considered that in third countries where religious minorities were faced with violations of their rights, such problems could not be solved by protecting and isolating them ‘from’ the surrounding societies and thus creating ‘parallel societies’; urged the EEAS and the EU Member States, in the light of recent events in countries such as Nigeria, Egypt and Indonesia, to put in place concrete actions to help prevent the emergence of a cycle of violence (para 107 cont.);

- invited the EEAS and other EU institutions to combat unacceptable practices such as forced conversions and the criminalisation/punishment for cases of so-called ‘apostasy’, applying pressure on third countries, such as Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia that still carried out such practices, so that the practices were eliminated; called for an equally firm stance against the instrumentalisation of blasphemy laws for the purpose of persecuting members of religious minorities (para 109);

Discrimination

- commended the Council, the EEAS, the VP/HR, the Commission and the Member States on their engagement in favour of LGBT people’s human rights in bilateral relations with third countries, in multilateral forums, and through the EIDHR; welcomed the reintroduction by the UN General Assembly of sexual orientation as grounds for protection from extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, and welcomed the EU’s efforts to this end; called on the Commission to advocate the withdrawal of gender identity from the list of mental and behavioural disorders in the negotiations on the 11th version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) and to seek a non-pathologising reclassification; reasserted that the principle of non-discrimination, also embracing grounds of sex and sexual orientation, had not to be compromised in the ACP-EU partnership; reiterated its request that the Commission produce a comprehensive roadmap against homophobia, transphobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, also addressing human rights violations on these grounds in the world; called on the Member States to grant asylum to people fleeing persecution in countries where LGBT people were criminalised, taking into consideration applicants’ well founded fears of persecution, and relying on their self-identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (para 113);

- welcomed the ‘toolkit’ adopted by the Council’s working party on human rights in 2010 with the aim of helping the EU institutions, the Member States, the delegations and other bodies to react swiftly when the human rights of LGBT people were violated; called on the Commission to address the structural causes of such violations, and on the Council to work towards binding guidelines in this area (para 114);

Children’s rights

- recalled the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the need to ensure the fullest protection of the rights enshrined therein and to prevent these rights from being eroded; welcomed the UNGA’s adoption, on 19 December 2011, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, and called on the Council and the Commission to accelerate efforts to achieve universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and to promote their effective implementation; called, too, for decisive efforts to advance implementation of the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and the EU’s Strategy to combat All Forms of Violence against Children; called on the VP/HR and the European External Action Service to include in EU Annual Reports on Human Rights a section on children’s rights (para 119);

Freedom of expression and (social) media

- urged the Council and the Commission to include, in accession negotiations, human rights dialogues and, in any contact regarding human rights, a call to end any hate speech in the media (para 122);

Business and human rights

- commended the EU for its support for the development of UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and their unanimous adoption in the Human Rights Council; welcomed the inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights held on 16 – 20 January 2012, and called for the EU to further support and contribute to the mandate of this body; stressed the crucial role of the national human rights institutions and the cooperation of those bodies in the EU and Neighbourhood Countries in taking forward the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as recognised in, among other places, UN Human Rights Council Resolution 17/4 (para 130);

welcomed initiatives aimed at transferring good practice, coordinating and animating cooperation between the EU and Neighbourhood national human rights institutions, such as the programme for cooperation between Ombudsmen from Eastern Partnership countries 2009-2013 that was jointly set up by the Polish and French Ombudsmen with a view to enhancing the capacity of Ombudsmen's offices, government bodies and non-governmental organisations in Eastern Partnership countries to protect individual rights and build democratic states based on the rule of law; stressed the need for such action to be coordinated within the EU and for the EU institutions to draw on the experience gained in connection therewith (cont. para 130);

- took note of the fact that transnational corporations increasingly rely on private military and security companies (PMSCs), which on occasion had given rise to human rights violations perpetrated by PMSC employees; considered that the adoption of EU regulatory measures, including a comprehensive normative system for the establishment, registration, licensing, monitoring and reporting by such companies, was necessary; called on the Commission to propose a Recommendation paving the way for a directive aimed at harmonising national measures regulating PMSC services, including service providers and the procurement of services, and the drafting of a Code of Conduct paving the way for a Decision regulating the export of PMSC services to third states; called for detailed information to be provided by the VP/HR to Parliament on the hiring of PMSCs on CSDP and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) missions, specifying professional requirements and corporate standards demanded of contractors, applicable regulations, legal responsibilities and obligations imposed upon them and monitoring mechanisms (para 134);

Enhancing the European Parliament's actions on human rights

- reiterated its appeal to the Council and the Commission to systematically take up Parliament's resolutions and other communications, responding in a substantive manner; proposed that Parliament consider establishing a systematic mechanism to ensure a more effective and tangible follow-up to its decisions (para 136);

The European Union's strategic human rights policy

- supported the VP/HR's personal proposal for three themes for specific collective action by institutions over the coming three years; seeks clear criteria for the current and future process by which such themes were chosen; sought clarification on how these campaigns would enable progress in specific areas without prejudicing the EU's comprehensive commitment to all human rights obligations (para 145).

- d) Negotiations of the EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement
European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2012 containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the negotiations of the EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement

The European Parliament:

- addressed the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service: they should
 - ensure that the Association Agreement is a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for the future development of relations with Azerbaijan, one which enhances political association, economic convergence and legal approximation and reflects the relationship that both the European Union and Azerbaijan have decided to develop;
 - ensure that the negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Armenia Association Agreements, in line with the demands made in Parliament's Resolution on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus of 20 May 2010 and with all the OSCE Minsk Group Basic Principles enshrined in the 'Aquila' joint statement of 19 July 2009, are linked to credible commitments to making substantial progress towards the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including, for example, confidence-building measures such as general demilitarisation, the withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh at first, and their return to Azerbaijani control, and a mechanism for active incident-prevention and the investigation of cease-fire violations along the line of contact, the right of all internally-displaced persons and refugees to return to their home settlements and properties and international security guarantees that would include a genuine multinational peacekeeping operation in order to create suitable agreed conditions for the future legally-binding free expression of will concerning the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh;

- incorporate in the Association Agreement clauses and benchmarks on the protection and promotion of human rights, especially with regard to freedom of the media and the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, which reflect the principles and rights enshrined in the Constitution of Azerbaijan and the highest international and European standards, drawing to the fullest possible extent on the Council of Europe and OSCE frameworks to which Azerbaijan has committed itself; call on the government of Azerbaijan to implement these commitments; and ensure that the negotiations take full account of the need to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of internally-displaced persons and refugees;
- consider the presence of the EU in the OSCE Minsk Group as increasing the EU’s involvement in the resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan;
- emphasise in the Association Agreement the importance of guaranteeing citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right of assembly and association, and private property rights, the development of civil society, the rule of law, the continued fight against corruption, political pluralism and the independence of the media and the judiciary;
- underline in the Association Agreement the importance of the Republic of Azerbaijan fully complying with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights;
- emphasise in the Association Agreement the crucial importance of freedom of expression for political opponents and stress that deeper relations with the EU are dependent on the Azerbaijani authorities adhering to the rule of law, ensuring fair trials for all prisoners and the unconditional release of all those imprisoned on politically-motivated charges;
- assist Azerbaijan’s parliament both technically and financially in fully developing its constitutional functions, bodies and services, including enhanced interaction with civil society;
- support development aid programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan;
- incorporate in the agreement clauses on the protection of human rights defenders, in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;

- call on the Azerbaijani authorities to guarantee that the ongoing construction of new buildings in Baku, which is considered to be partly linked to the upcoming Eurovision Song Contest, is in line with the relevant legislation and that resettlements of people are implemented with transparent legal procedures; express concern at the increasing government criticism of human rights activists who are using this cultural event to improve the democratic and human rights record of the country;
- grant a visa to the PACE Special Rapporteur on Political Prisoners in order to allow him to undertake a visit to the country, in line with his mandate;
- express concern about the increasing number of arrests of human rights and youth activists, the difficulties encountered with regard to the registration of NGOs and political parties as well as intimidation and restrictions of the freedom of expression and assembly and Internet freedom, and set benchmarks in these areas, with suspension of the agreement if these benchmarks are not met;
- urge the Azerbaijani authorities to adopt an anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in any area;
- bring the objectives of the Association Agreement into line with the Joint Communication on a Renewed Response to a Changing Neighbourhood, thereby enabling civil society organisations in Azerbaijan to carry out internal monitoring of, and ensuring that the government is held more accountable for, its reforms and commitments;
- ensure the coherence of the Association Agreement with the principles of international law – in particular, those defined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and in the OSCE framework, namely the non-use of force, territorial integrity and the right to self determination, – and that the Agreement, once concluded, applies to the whole territory of Azerbaijan;
- strengthen the European Union’s conflict-resolution and mediation capacity and adopt a more active and effective role with regard to increasing trust between the parties in conflict, including by assisting them through EU-funded confidence-building projects aimed at increasing popular support for mutual concessions and peaceful settlement; underline the need for unconditional access for representatives of the EU to Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding occupied regions; insist that the EU should play a stronger role in settling the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh by supporting the implementation of confidence-building measures which will bring together the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities and spread the ideas of peace, reconciliation and trust through all the sides involved;

- welcome the work done by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the parties in making progress towards agreement on the Basic Principles and call for continued support for its work; stress that both Azerbaijan and Armenia should take the appropriate measures to ensure that any decisions taken under the Minsk Group format towards establishing and consolidating a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are carried out fully and in a timely fashion; consider direct and more active participation of the EU in the Minsk Group;
- call on the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to act responsibly, tone down statements and avoid inflammatory declarations in order to pave the way for a genuine dialogue at all levels of society so that the public will accept and fully understand the benefits of a comprehensive settlement, thereby paving the way for effective confidence-building measures;
- express concern about the military build-up in the region and in particular about Azerbaijan's high military expenditure and call in this respect on the Member States to stop supplying weapons and munitions to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, in compliance with the OSCE request of February 1992, as long as a comprehensive settlement has not been agreed and signed by the two parties;
- stress the need to continue to do everything possible within the framework of the Eastern Partnership to bring about political and economic rapprochement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to firmly establish regional conflict resolution as an integral component of this;
- stress that hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally-displaced persons who fled their homes during or in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh war remain displaced and denied their rights, including the right to return, property rights and the right to personal security – those rights should be unconditionally respected and provided without any delay; call on the Commission and the Members States to continue and extend the EU's assistance and financial support to Azerbaijan in dealing with the situation of displaced persons;
- emphasise the need to use the Association Agreement as a platform to promote regional synergies and cooperation, emphasise the mutually-reinforcing links between democratic pluralistic development and conflict resolution, and ensure that the Association Agreement contains provisions to encourage visa facilities for all people from the South Caucasus countries;

- clarify how the substantial degree of complementarity between the various EU initiatives in the region, namely the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy, is to be exploited;
- call on Turkey to play a constructive role in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and in fulfilling its responsibility in that region;
- ensure that the trade component of the Association Agreement can be upgraded to a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as soon as Azerbaijan meets all the necessary conditions, including joining the WTO and fulfilling its commitments with respect to human rights, and with that aim in mind, provide the necessary technical assistance to prepare Azerbaijan for the negotiations and to encourage the adoption of the reforms required;
- urge Azerbaijan to sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
- urge the Azerbaijani authorities to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions;
- ensure speedy negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements in order to promote people-to-people contacts and treat youth and academic mobility as a priority; contribute to the fight against illegal immigration, and ensure that the provisions on asylum are fully in line with international obligations and commitments and EU standards, especially in the field of human rights;
- underline the importance of building and developing a strong youth sector and welcome in this regard the various state programmes offering scholarships for studying abroad;
- urge Azerbaijan not to hamper visa issues for third-country nationals of Armenian origin wishing to enter Azerbaijan, and to lift the ban on international phone calls to Armenia;
- encourage broad sectoral cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan, and in particular, explain the benefits of and promote regulatory convergence and provide the necessary technical assistance to this end;
- urge the Azerbaijan authorities to step up implementation of the Core Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO);

- enhance transparency in the management of public finances and improve public procurement legislation in order to contribute significantly to good governance and transparent decision-making; welcome, in this respect, the participation of Azerbaijan in the Extractive Energy Transparency Initiative aimed at increasing openness on oil and gas revenues, and monitor the government of Azerbaijan’s compliance with its obligation to release information about public finances under the legislation on the right to access information;
- take the necessary action to incorporate in the Association Agreement provisions enabling Azerbaijan to participate in Community programmes and agencies, as a tool to promote European integration at all levels;
- welcome the reforms made by Azerbaijani authorities in the judiciary, with a view to ensuring greater independence of judges, improving selection and appointment procedures and eliminating judicial corruption and susceptibility to the influence of the executive; acknowledge that the relevant laws, including the law on the Bar, have been adopted; encourage the authorities in charge to continue implementing legislation to combat corruption and focus on high-level corruption cases as well as to improve significantly the transparency of public expenditure and political party funding; emphasise the need to improve the independence, efficiency and resources of the judiciary; reiterate the importance of the court system functioning free from political interference; stress the need to establish a convincing track record of recruiting and appointing judges and state prosecutors based on the application of uniform, transparent, objective and nationally-applicable criteria and to build up an enforcement record of prosecutions and convictions against which progress can be measured; call for the unification of jurisprudence in order to ensure a predictable judicial system and public trust;
- set up twinning programmes with EU regions and local communities with national minorities experiencing a high degree of autonomy;
- emphasise the need for a sustainable economy, including by enhancing its diversification; promote greater openness and transparency in the energy sector and ensure that its development is carried out in accordance with international environmental standards; support the development of the renewable energy market; underline the need for corresponding environmental legislation;

- emphasise the importance of EU-Azerbaijan energy cooperation in the diversification of energy supplies and routes of their delivery to Europe; recall in this regard the Joint Declaration on gas delivery signed on 13 January 2011 in Baku by the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev as an important step in the realisation of the Southern Gas Corridor, and commend the efforts of Azerbaijan in promoting such pioneering projects as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines as the fulfilment of the AGRI Project;
- stress the importance of Azerbaijan’s unique geographic location for enabling a direct and unimpeded transit link between the EU and the countries of Central Asia; welcome efforts to develop trans-Caspian transit cooperation with Kazakhstan and explore ways of establishing such cooperation with Turkmenistan; welcome the Council mandate, signed on 12 September 2011, to conclude a legally-binding agreement between the EU, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on the Trans-Caspian pipeline;
- ensure the continued focused attention of the EU on the development of energy cooperation with Azerbaijan and sustainable support by the EU; provide technical assistance to the Azerbaijani State Agency for Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources in order to help Azerbaijan to diversify its energy resources, promote energy efficiency and bring the country in line with the EU climate change targets;
- find ways to encourage dialogue and regional cooperation by supporting organisations like the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) through joint cross-border projects that involve NGOs, local communities and stake-holders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia;
- incorporate in the Association Agreement a strong parliamentary dimension which provides for the full involvement of the Milli Mejlis and the European Parliament and enhances the work of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly;
- fully involve the European Parliament in the implementation and monitoring of the Association Agreement; establish clear benchmarks for the implementation of the Association Agreement and provide for monitoring mechanisms, including the submission of regular reports to the European Parliament;
- provide better-targeted technical assistance to Azerbaijan to ensure that it can meet the commitments stemming from the negotiations on the Association Agreement and its full implementation, by continuing to offer comprehensive institution-building programmes;

- encourage the EU negotiating team to continue to cooperate with the European Parliament, providing continuous feedback, supported by documentation, on the progress made, in accordance with Article 218(10) TFEU, which states that Parliament must be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure;
- further encourage a profound level of cooperation with and within the Eastern Partnership as well as regularly inform the European Parliament on its progress.

e) Negotiations of the EU-Armenia Association Agreement

European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2012 containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the negotiations of the EU-Armenia Association Agreement

The European Parliament:

- addressed the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service: they should
 - ensure that the Association Agreement is a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for the future development of relations with Armenia, one which enhances political association, economic convergence and legal approximation;
 - ensure that the negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Armenia Association Agreements, in line with the demands made in Parliament's Resolution on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus of 20 May 2010 and with all the OSCE Minsk Group Basic Principles enshrined in the 'Aquila' joint statement of 10 July 2009, are linked to credible commitments to making substantial progress towards the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including, for example, confidence-building measures such as general demilitarisation, the withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh and their return to Azerbaijani control, and a mechanism for active incident-prevention and the investigation of cease-fire violations along the line of contact, the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their home settlements and properties and international security guarantees that would include a genuine multinational peacekeeping operation in order to create suitable agreed conditions for the future legally-binding free expression of will concerning the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh;

- stress the utmost importance of democratic, transparent, free and fair competitive elections, which should not only manifest themselves in the orderly conduct of the May 2012 elections on election day but also provide plurality, freedom of political discourse, freedom of speech and equal access of all political forces to mainstream broadcast media, and freedom of assembly and movement during the whole pre- and post-electoral process; stresses that the EU Delegation in Armenia should be provided with the necessary resources to enhance the EU's contribution to the quality of electoral processes; commend the adoption of the new Electoral Code of Armenia, which is consistent with international obligations and recommendations;
- stress that it is essential to complete a transparent, independent and impartial investigation of the events of 1 March 2008, including an independent investigation of the police intervention during the dispersal of the demonstration;
- recognise Armenia's European aspirations and consider them as a valuable lever and a necessary catalyst for implementation of reforms and public support for these reforms aimed at strengthening Armenia's commitment to shared values and the principles of the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance;
- incorporate into the Association Agreement clauses and benchmarks on the protection and promotion of human rights which reflect the highest international and European standards, drawing to the fullest possible extent on Council of Europe and OSCE frameworks and the ongoing EU-Armenia Human Rights Dialogue;
- emphasise in the Association Agreement the importance of guaranteeing the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and association, the development of civil society, the rule of law, the continued fight against corruption, ensuring market competitiveness, and the independence of the media;
- urge the Armenian authorities to adopt anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in any area;
- encourage the Armenian authorities to continue with renewed efforts legislative reform in the country;
- encourage the Armenian authorities to continue to develop the office of Human Rights Defender, in particular by providing him with additional financial and human resources and supporting the newly established regional offices; ensure that support to institutions such as the Human Rights Defender is balanced proportionately with support to civil society organisations;

- stress in particular the importance of the independence of the judiciary, transparent procurement procedures, the separation of politics from business and the need to dismantle oligarchic structures within the economy, reliable court procedures that guarantee fair trial and access to justice for all citizens, a safe environment for investigative journalism, access to information and independent and social media and the prevention of any forms of torture and ill-treatment in detention centres; encourage the Armenian Government to make every possible effort to continue complying with EU best practices and recommendations in these areas;
- emphasise the importance which the European Union attaches to the prevention of and fight against corruption in the Eastern Partnership countries, especially in light of the Council Conclusions on cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs within the Eastern Partnership at its 3135th meeting on 13 and 14 December 2011;
- underline the relationship between the reform of law enforcement authorities in the partner countries and measures to combat financial crime, corruption, money laundering, and the financing of terrorism;
- emphasise the need to fight impunity for law enforcement officials and the police, inter alia by ensuring that torture and violations of rights in custody and in closed institutions are fully investigated;
- ensure that civil society and non-governmental organisations in Armenia are regularly and systematically consulted throughout the Association Agreement negotiation process, and ensure that their recommendations are noted and taken into account wherever appropriate;
- ensure that the Association Agreement is consistent with the principles of international law, in particular with regard to those defined in the UN Charter, in the Helsinki Final Act and in the OSCE framework, namely the non-use of force, territorial integrity and right to self determination;
- remind all parties that there can be no alternative to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; emphasise that any threat to use force undermines the joint efforts of the international community;

- call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to undertake confidence-building measures along the front lines, including withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact (in accordance with OSCE recommendations), the pullback and cessation of use of any artillery and a significant increase in the number of OSCE monitors, as an interim measure until a UN-mandated multinational peacekeeping force is deployed as part of the implementation of a peace agreement; call on Armenia to stop sending regular army conscripts to serve in Nagorno-Karabakh;
- strengthen the European Union’s conflict-resolution and mediation capacity, inter alia by stepping up its support for the Minsk Group’s efforts, offering to play a more active and stronger role in supporting the implementation of confidence-building measures and increasing trust between the conflict parties, including by promoting a more intensive negotiation process and assisting them through EU-funded projects aimed at increasing popular support for mutual concessions and a peaceful settlement, and providing support for humanitarian programmes in the conflict-affected areas, in particular landmine clearance activities;
- play a more prominent role in seeking a settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh by supporting the implementation of confidence-building measures which will bring together Armenian and Azerbaijani communities and spread the ideas of peace, reconciliation and trust among all sides; stress that both Armenia and Azerbaijan should take the appropriate measures to ensure that any decisions taken under the Minsk Group format towards consolidating a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are carried out fully and in a timely fashion; underline the need for unconditional access for representatives of the EU to Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding occupied regions;
- consider the presence of the EU in the OSCE Minsk group as increasing the EU’s involvement in the resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan;
- strengthen the European Union’s conflict-resolution capacity in the South Caucasus, inter alia by supporting the efforts of the Minsk Group and clearing the way for the implementation of confidence-building measures, as the Presidents of both Azerbaijan and Armenia have agreed; emphasise the need for the earliest peaceful settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of the principles of international law and the decisions and documents approved in this framework;
- call on all external actors to the conflict to show goodwill and contribute in a positive way to its prompt and peaceful resolution;

- call on the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to act responsibly, tone down statements and refrain from inflammatory declarations in order to pave the way for a genuine dialogue at all levels of society and lay the ground for effective confidence-building measures;
- express concern about the military build-up in the region and, in particular, about Armenian high military expenditure that drains away resources from more urgent issues such as poverty reduction, social security and economic development, and call, in this connection, on Member States to stop supplying weapons and munitions to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, in compliance with the OSCE request of February 1992, as long as a comprehensive settlement has not been agreed and signed by the two parties;
- note in this regard the need to investigate concerning reports of a settlement-building policy implemented by the Armenian authorities to increase the Armenian population in the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh;
- stress the importance of ratifying the protocols signed between Armenia and Turkey in Zurich in 2009 and step up efforts to facilitate the normalisation of relations, with the subsequent opening of the frontier without any preconditions; welcome the decision to open negotiations on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), in this respect emphasise that it is unacceptable to have a continuously closed border between countries which aspire to membership of or association with the EU, and urge that this situation be brought to an end;
- urge Armenia to make efforts to align its policy towards Iran with the EU approach to this country;
- emphasise the need to use the Association Agreement as a platform to promote regional synergies and cooperation; emphasise the mutually reinforcing links between democratic pluralistic development and conflict resolution; particularly stress the importance of creating synergies in the areas of transport and energy; call on all parties to fully engage in the multilateral cooperation track of the Eastern Partnership without linking it to the conflicts;
- find ways to encourage dialogue and regional cooperation by supporting organisations like the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) through joint cross-border projects that involve NGOs, local communities and stake-holders in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia;

- urge Armenia to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court without further delay as a vital step towards bringing national legislation into line with international judicial agreements which have been embraced by the countries of the European Union;
- urge the Armenian authorities to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions;
- emphasise the importance of mobility in promoting European integration; treat youth and academic mobility as a priority during the negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements; call on Armenia to improve its national higher education laws, with a special emphasis on synchronisation procedures for scientific degrees and legal regulation of student internships in the light of the Bologna process; ensure that the provisions on asylum are fully in line with international obligations and commitments and EU standards;
- ensure the transparent management of public finances and the improvement of public procurement legislation, for the purpose of ensuring good governance and a transparent decision-making process;
- encourage broad sectoral cooperation between the EU and Armenia; in particular, explain the benefits of and promote regulatory convergence in this area and, to this end, provide the necessary financial and technical assistance;
- welcome the incorporation of EU best practices and recommendations in Armenia during the preparation of national work plans in the field of justice, freedom and security; note, in particular, the tangible results achieved in the migration sector by the signing of the Joint Declaration on Mobility Partnership;
- take the necessary action to incorporate in the Association Agreement provisions enabling Armenia to participate in Community programmes and agencies, as a fundamental tool to promote European integration at all levels;
- emphasise the need for a sustainable economy, including through the promotion of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency in line with the EU targets on climate change; ensure that the development of the energy sector is carried out in accordance with the EU's environmental standards and the UN Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ESPOO Convention);

- reiterate the request to shut down the Medzamor nuclear power plant before 2016 since it cannot be upgraded to meet current agreed internationally recognised standards;
- continue to provide the necessary technical support to allow the prompt launch of negotiations on all aspects of the Association Agreement, and ensure that the recently opened negotiations on the DCFTA are continued at a steady pace;
- incorporate in the Association Agreement a strong parliamentary dimension which provides for the full involvement of the National Assembly of Armenia and the European Parliament in the implementation and monitoring of the Agreement; assist Armenia’s parliament both technically and financially in fully developing its constitutional functions, bodies and services, including the establishment of full-fledged standing committees and enhanced interaction with civil society; provide the European Parliament with regular information on the state of play of the negotiation process;
- incorporate in the Association Agreement clear benchmarks for its implementation and provide for monitoring mechanisms, including the submission of regular reports to the European Parliament;
- provide better-targeted financial and technical assistance to Armenia to ensure that it can meet the commitments stemming from the negotiations on the Association Agreement and its full implementation, by continuing to offer Comprehensive Institution-Building programmes, including in such areas as civil service and justice reform;
- encourage the Armenian authorities to make full use of the expertise of the High-Level EU Advisory Group in the negotiation and implementation process and to keep the EU advisers fully informed also of the activities of the Eastern Partnership IBM Flagship Initiative Panel; consider providing such assistance to all the Eastern Partners;
- recognise Armenia’s ambitious reform agenda under the Eastern Partnership and provide adequate assistance in accordance with the ‘more for more’ principle, according to the pace of reforms and measured against democracy and human rights indicators;
- increase, in line with the Joint Communication on ‘A renewed response to a changing Neighbourhood’, EU assistance for civil society organisations in Armenia, so that they can carry out internal monitoring of reforms and commitments and ensure that the government is held more accountable therefore;

- encourage the EU negotiating team to continue the good cooperation with the European Parliament, providing continuous feedback, supported by documentation, on the progress made, in accordance with Article 218(10) TFEU, which states that Parliament must be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure.

f) Children with Down syndrome

Declaration of the European Parliament of 18 April 2012 on children with Down syndrome

The European Parliament:

- called on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to:
 - contribute to the social inclusion of children with Down syndrome by means of awareness-raising campaigns at national and European level;
 - promote pan-European research into the treatment of this condition;
 - draw up a Europe-wide strategy for protecting the rights of children with Down syndrome in the EU.

g) Call for concrete ways to combat tax fraud and tax evasion

European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2012 on the call for concrete ways to combat tax fraud and tax evasion

The European Parliament:

- welcomed the conclusions of the European Council meeting of 1 and 2 March calling on Member States, where appropriate, to review their tax systems with the aim of making them more effective and efficient, removing unjustified exemptions, broadening the tax base, shifting taxes away from labour, improving the efficiency of tax collection and tackling tax evasion, to rapidly intensify the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion, including in relation to third countries, and to report by June 2012 (para 1).